

Inside and Out / Dawnland Power

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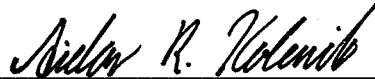
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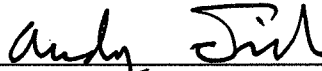
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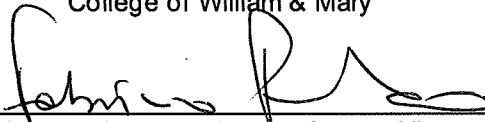


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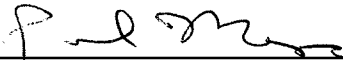
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ABSTRACT

Inside and Out: The Culture and Politics of the Wampanoag Language and its Reclamation

Indigenous communities like the Wampanoag have historically used language both internally as an affirmation of culture and identity, and externally as a political display of sovereignty. The modern Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project is an extension of this use of language as a tool of power to both strengthen communal bonds and assert sovereignty. Coopting the concept of literacy from English settlers in the seventeenth century, the Wampanoag combined this new instrument with their own language to maintain their autonomy in the face of Euroamerican colonization efforts. In doing so, they established a precedent of resistance and assertions of communal autonomy through language. And, in the wake of the Red Power movement and federal acknowledgements in the twentieth century, the Wampanoag are once again turning to language to assert their power.

Dawnland Power: The Wabanaki Confederacy and Indigenous Exploitation of Imperial Competition in King William's War

Rather than experiencing a slow decline of their autonomy and power after King Philip's War, the Indigenous nations of the Dawnland continued to exert control over the regions of Maine and southern Canada throughout the seventeenth century. King William's War is the culmination of this situation, with the Wabanaki Confederacy using imperial competition to fortify their position as the dominant group in the region, waging war against the English for their transgressions and using the French as avenues of material gain. By the end of the conflict, the Wabanaki had once again subjugated English colonists and their governments, as they had decades earlier, forcing them to submit to continued Indigenous regional control in Maine, and dictating how the relationship proceeded from there. Additionally, they continued to play the English and French against one another to ensure their access to the material wealth of empires remained. King William's War and its aftermath show that Indigenous power ruled the Dawnland, and that groups like the Wabanaki Confederacy recognized their place within the Atlantic world and exploited European competition accordingly.

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Intellectual Biography

My journey to William & Mary was not a standard track for academia. Entering my undergraduate career intending to study history and pursue higher education, I chose my path accordingly. And, despite switching my historical focus from the Adriatic in my junior year when I discovered my interest in Indigenous history, I still intended to immediately enter a graduate program. However, as I began my senior year, I realized that the past 16 years of my life had been dedicated to school. How could I commit to more without knowing what else was out there? And so, I decided to take a few years away from academia. Working various jobs, as a baker, a running shoe salesman, and finally a legal assistant, I explored what the working world had to offer. And, inevitably, it brought me back here. My return to academia has been deeply rewarding; it has opened my eyes to new facets of scholarship, new areas of the field, and new possibilities in the professional world, and for that I am grateful.

I began both research papers with the intellectual enthusiasm that accompanies every new project, allowing my imagination to take over as I conceptualized groundbreaking scholarship that would incorporate varying and diverse methodologies and source bases. However, these dreams soon came crashing down as the reality of graduate education set in, and I realized those projects would not be possible based on the temporal limitations, availability of sources, and frankly my own academic abilities. Instead, the papers that manifested were far more contained. They are realistic expressions of what I was able to accomplish under the circumstances. And, despite all this, I am still proud

of both. Far from groundbreaking, they nevertheless contribute to the scholarship on their respective topics and, recognizing they are far from finished, I hope to build upon each paper in the future, giving each the proper time and attention such projects deserve.

I am deeply passionate about Indigenous history, and as I entered the graduate program here, I had an idea of what kind of historical stories I wanted to tell. I had written about things like Indigenous slavery and servitude in New England in the past, and I wanted to continue exploring such topics. However, through my studies at William & Mary, I found myself drawn to stories of Indigenous power and Indigenous knowledge. Such historiography seemed to carry a weight owed to the subject matter, and I wanted to contribute to it however I could. As such, these papers reflect my broadened intellectual curiosity: they are my attempt at utilizing different sources and methods to tell more Indigenous-based histories. Whether I have accomplished such a goal will be left up to the reader. I have come to understand the importance of Indigenous history, and specifically those that tell Indigenous stories, both to the academy and to the modern world. In my position as a scholar, I have tried to be as respectful to the subjects of these papers as I can, but I am sure I have erred in some way. I hope that, if this is the case, those reading this who know more than I will reach out to me and help me to see my mistakes so that I may right them. Regardless, I hope people can walk away from their experience with these papers having learned one new thing. Or, at the very least, I hope they can find some entertainment within them.

Inside and Out: The Culture and Politics of the Wampanoag Language and its
Reclamation

Indigenous communities like the Wampanoag have historically used language both internally as an affirmation of culture and identity, and externally as a political display of sovereignty. The modern Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project is an extension of this use of language as a tool of power, to both strengthen communal bonds and assert sovereignty. The Wampanoag use of English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is often viewed as their attempt to coopt the power of the English language to preserve themselves and their community. And, while this is certainly true into the nineteenth century, many Wampanoag initially relied on their own language to assert their power, coopting the concept of literacy but maintaining their linguistic sovereignty well into the eighteenth century. Jacqueline Fear-Segal notes how Indigenous communities viewed and used English education and language as a “club,” one of whose meanings denotes a “weapon, a means to power,” to their advantage.¹ However, before English came to power as a language, the club wielded in Massachusetts was decidedly Wampanoag. And, in the wake of the Red Power movement and federal acknowledgements, it is once again taking that shape. The Wampanoag language historically fostered cultural continuity in the community as well as asserted political sovereignty to the outside world, what Paratha Chatterjee would refer to as the material and the spiritual, or inner and outside realms.² In revitalizing the language, modern Wampanoag tribal members are once again using it to both extents.

The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP) began in 1993 with jessie little doe baird, but its roots go much deeper than that. An intertribal effort between

¹ Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club: Schools, Race, and the Struggle of Indian Acculturation*, (Lincoln, NE, 2007), xi.

² Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, (Princeton, 1993), 6.

Mashpee, Assonet, Aquinnah, Herring Pond, and Chappaquiddick Wampanoag, the project, in their words, seeks to “return language fluency to the Wampanoag Nation as a principal means of expression.”³ Before the project began, there were no known native speakers left. Whereas other languages like Passamaquoddy-Maliseet had some native speakers alive at the start of its reclamation project, baird and the Wampanoag had to start from scratch.⁴ However, through documentary analysis of Wampanoag-language texts, collaboration with other Algonquian language speakers, and rigorous linguistic work, the project members have been able to not only return the spoken language to a high degree, but they have expanded upon it, bringing it into the modern world. In awakening the sleeping language, baird and the other project members have returned an important cultural and political tool to their people. Where I can, I have privileged the words of Wampanoag peoples themselves as they have talked about the program and about the language itself. In quoting these interviews, I hope to show that the community’s own understanding of themselves and their language is fundamentally tied to their cultural identity. Historians in the field have spent decades lamenting the lack of Indigenous sources for projects on the Northeast. Alden T. Vaughn explains that “the most serious gap in the documentation lies, of course, in the total absence of Indian sources,” and that the Wampanoag and other tribes in New England “had no written language, nor even a partial substitute for one.”⁵ These views have carried into today, and although historians have long tried to recount Indigenous stories from their own point of view, they often use anthropological or ethnographical sources.⁶ While such

³ “Project History,” Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project, 2021, accessed December 14, 2021 (accessed at <https://www.wlrp.org/project-history>).

⁴ “Passamaquoddy Language,” Passamaquoddy at Sipayik, accessed December 14, 2021 (accessed at https://www.wabanaki.com/wabanaki_new/index.html).

⁵ Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675*, 3rd ed., (Norman, OK, 1995), lxi.

⁶ Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643*, (New York, 1982), 6-7.

work is vitally important to the field, equally important is giving weight to what Indigenous people themselves were and are saying about their own stories. The Wampanoag voices do not only shine through in English sources; they appear on their own, using their voices, and later the written word, to assert their own story in their own language. The sources, and the language they are in, need to be appreciated in scholarship, especially in a piece about language, lest they tell only part of the story.

Indigenous languages and language use contribute to a group's cultural identity as well as their communal cohesion and autonomy. Through knowledge and the use of a language, group members can connect not only with others in their community, but with their own history, marking the group as distinct from those surrounding it. Since many traditional stories, songs, and aspects of ceremonies may include Indigenous language use, or may be entirely performed in the language, an individual's ability to speak and understand the language may facilitate their participation in the activities. Participation would therefore strengthen the individual's sense of self within the community, and their sense of their community as distinct.⁷ In addition to participation in ceremonies, understanding a group's history can lead to a sense of connection between generations within a community. Passing history and knowledge from one generation to another fosters a bond, linking the young members to the older ones and increasingly the likelihood that they will continue the traditions of the community.⁸ In this way, language allows access to traditional knowledge and historical information that helps members better understand lasting cultural practices. For example, according to Jessie Little Doe Baird, "there are still practices that happen at burial ceremonies and nobody understood

⁷ Lisa Droogendyk and Stephen C. Wright, "A social psychological examination of the empowering role of language in Indigenous resistance," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 20, 3, (2017), 305.

⁸ Noelle Higgins and Gerard Maguire, "Language, Indigenous Peoples, and the Right to Self-Determination," *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 31, 2, 8 (2019), 4.

why, and now when we look at language, we can clearly see why we do certain things at burial ceremonies, and language gives us those answers.”⁹ Thusly, individuals and groups can, through language, reveal the traditional knowledge of their community, thereby strengthening their connection to their shared past. This understanding of the way things are, and why they came to be that way, creates a sense of “cultural continuity,” a lasting sense of being, for both the individual and the community they belong to.¹⁰

Indigenous languages are also important from an ontological standpoint: they inform how an individual orders their world. Droogendyk and Wright have noted that “English (or another dominant non-Indigenous language) is simply inadequate to express the nuances of Indigenous knowledge,” and that by “internalizing the language of the colonizer, Indigenous people’s understanding of reality itself has shifted.”¹¹ Indigenous groups have unique ways of understanding and interacting with the world. These fundamental differences often go beyond simple description; other languages cannot capture the subtleties of perception the way a native tongue can. One example is that the Wampanoag language centers relationality regarding its kinship terms in a way that English does not. As Baird outlines, “you can say, ‘She’s my mother, she’s your mother, she’s our mother, she’s his or her mother.’ But you can’t just say ‘a mother.’”¹² As Eva Blake, another member of the Wampanoag tribe, put it in an interview at Brandeis University in 2020, “There is no way to separate the relationship between the

⁹ J. Kehaulani Kauanui and Robert Warrior, “Jessie Little Doe Baird on Reviving the Wampanoag Language” in *Speaking of Indigenous Politics: Conversations with Activists, Scholars, and Tribal Leaders*, (Minneapolis, 2018), 8.

¹⁰ Droogendyk and Wright, “A social psychological examination of the empowering role of language in Indigenous resistance,” 306.

¹¹ Droogendyk and Wright, “A social psychological examination of the empowering role of language in Indigenous resistance,” 309, 307.

¹² Nicole Carroll, “The language had gone quiet. Remarkably, she brought it back, saving far more than just words,” *USA Today*, August 17, 2020.

person speaking and the person being spoken of.”¹³ This type of inherent relationality is not present in English, which inhibits Wampanoag members from expressing themselves in their full capacity.

In addition, the structure of the language itself informs how a speaker interacts with the world around them. Baird notes that “If I see something, ‘I see’ is going to come out differently depending on whether what I’m seeing is animate or inanimate.”¹⁴ In creating a dichotomy of animate versus inanimate nouns, an Indigenous speaker perceives their world around this bisection, which in turn reveals communal understandings of the processes of their environment. For example, in the Wampanoag language, the Sun is treated as inanimate, but the earth is animate, as is the moon. This classification shows a Wampanoag understanding of the universe and the cosmos that posits the sun as a fixed body and the earth as moving, rather than a traditional earth-centered model.¹⁵ Concepts like this are one small part of the way the Wampanoag order the world around them. Perceptions both large and small are reflected in language choices and peculiarities that can never truly be expressed when translated into another language. Beyond word choice, the basic principles of the language, the formative tenants of relationality and order that dictate every linguistic interaction, reflect a unique way of life that bond a community together.

Language is therefore very important to a community’s sense of self and identity. Through it, individuals can connect with their nation’s traditions and history, understand their world, and form a relationship to the land they are from. However, language is not simply a cultural marker to strengthen a community’s internal sense of self. Rather, it

¹³ Claire Ogden, “Assonet Wampanoag Educator Discusses Language Reclamation and Identity,” *The Brandeis Hoot*, Waltham, October 16, 2020.

¹⁴ Kauanui and Warrior, “Jessie Little Doe Baird on Reviving the Wampanoag Language,” 10.

¹⁵ *We Still Live Here – Às Nutayuneân*, a film by Anne Makepeace, (2011).

can and is used as an external assertion of sovereignty. The Wampanoag have traditionally used their language in this way, asserting their autonomy and sovereignty in the face of intertribal conflict and the rising tide of colonization that followed. They used language in tandem with kinship networks to connect with groups and communities around them, to build confederations of power and influence in the region among the local sachemships. In this way, Ousamequin, as the local sachem at Pokanoket, was also able to act as the paramount sachem for all the Wampanoag.¹⁶

This political nature of language can best be seen when it was confronted with an entirely new language in a colonial setting. As the newcomers in the seventeenth century, the English benefitted from previous acts of oppression and aggression, which had prepared for their linguistic arrival. Europeans were in contact with the area for nearly a century before the Scrooby community landed on Cape Cod. Much of this had been the facilitation of trade along the coast and the islands, but these interactions were often marred by European kidnappings of Indigenous peoples, either for slavery, ransom, or to take back across the Atlantic. Several Indigenous people from various New England Tribes, including Epenow of Martha's Vineyard, and Tisquantum of Patuxet, were kidnapped and sent to Europe to be enslaved, but found their way to London, where they learned English.¹⁷ Through cunning wit and immense power of will, they returned to New England, albeit a changed one. In acquiring this new language skill, they enabled the English an outlet to communicate with the Wampanoag once they were here. However, this did not mean English supplanted Wampanoag. It carried with it power through a connection to the might of the colony, a power that Indigenous people like Tisquantum and later John Sassamon would use to their own advantages. But, this

¹⁶ David J. Silverman, *This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving*, (New York, 2019), 52-53.

¹⁷ Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence*, 95-107.

power was initially rebuked by, and later circumvented by, Wampanoag language as the traditional language of power in the community. Ousamequin, as the paramount sachem of the Wampanoag, did not learn English. Instead, he worked through interpreters. As one more group in the area, Ousamequin held no deference to them: diplomatic relations were conducted, but the power clearly remained with the Wampanoag.¹⁸

Not only did Wampanoag members actively use their own language to assert their autonomy, but early on members of the English colonial ventures understood that to truly connect with tribal members, they had to learn the language. This is most clearly demonstrated in the role of the Wampanoag language in conversion attempts. For English missionaries in the seventeenth century, as well as preachers into the eighteenth century, it became very important to not only proselytize in the Wampanoag language, but to establish the language as a written one.¹⁹ There were many factors that influenced this latter point, but primary among them was the fundamental importance of the written word in Protestantism. For Protestants, an essential break with Catholicism came over the role of the vernacular in church matters. Catholicism at the time still maintained that Latin was the only language through which laity could connect with God, and that only those ordained could preach the word. Although the various sects of Protestantism disagreed on many aspects of the faith, they all agreed that the Bible and the teachings of the church should be available in the vernacular, as to create a more intense connection between the people and God. The Puritans of Plymouth and

¹⁸ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 150.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Mifflin, "Closing the Circle": Native American Writings in Colonial New England, a Documentary Nexus between Acculturation and Cultural Preservation," *The American Archivist*, 72, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009), 348.

Massachusetts both believed this, and so Wampanoag converts, to earnestly connect with God, had to be able to read and interpret the Scriptures themselves.²⁰

In translating the Bible into Wampanoag, Eliot and the other colonists who worked on the project signaled that it was more important for the Wampanoag to critically understand the tenets of Christianity and the content of the Bible than to learn the English meanings. Not only that, but he acknowledged that the Wampanoag language was itself a proper vehicle for the word of God. The combined effort of English missionaries and Christian Wampanoag succeeded in translating the Bible, along with many other primers, religious texts, and sermons, into the Wampanoag language. In addition, several people, including John Cotton, compiled Wampanoag vocabulary lists and quasi-dictionaries. These works helped spread not only the Gospel, but textual Wampanoag through the region. This would prove to be a momentous development, as the Wampanoag would now be able to harness the English obsession with the primacy of the written word to their own advantage. By codifying the Wampanoag language, the English helped to ensure the Wampanoag would maintain their language, and its cultural and political importance, at least for a while.²¹

Beyond the written translation of the Bible, conversion efforts mostly hinged on Wampanoag missionaries themselves, proselytizing to their own communities in their own language. This idea, that preaching in Wampanoag would allow for greater success with conversion, shows that English missionaries trusted them and their language enough to convey the complex nuances of the Christian faith. More importantly, it gave the Wampanoag more control over the conversion. In preaching, but also fielding intense

²⁰ Mifflin, "Closing the Circle," 348.

²¹ Steffi Dippold, "The Wampanoag word: John Eliot's Indian Grammar, the vernacular rebellion, and the elegancies of native speech," *Early American Literature*, 48, 3 (Fall, 2013). & Cotton, Josiah, and John Pickering. *Vocabulary of the Massachusetts or Natick Indian language*. (Cambridge Mass, 1829).

questions from the community, the Wampanoag missionaries used their own language to shape the communal understanding of Christianity. Therefore, through the vehicle of language, the Wampanoag bent Christianity to their will, blending it with their own religious beliefs and world views to create something new.²² This had long lasting political and cultural implications, but ensured that Wampanoag groups like those at Mashpee and Aquinnah would have control over their own destinies, at least to some degree. Wampanoag language users were best able to harness the political power of their own language through these Christian mission situations. In doing so, gained a great deal of linguistic autonomy, which they used to assert their continued sovereignty in situations both spiritual and secular.

English appreciation for and use of the Wampanoag language signaled an acknowledgment of not only its cultural importance, but its political importance as well. Roger Williams and Daniel Gookin both put a high value in learning the language, which serviced them well in their attempts to mediate and work between the communities. Williams's understanding and appreciation of the language went beyond basic reading and writing, though. By some accounts, he had not only mastered the basic tenants of the Narragansett language, but the oral traditions and oral styles as well.²³ Experience Mayhew was known to have a similar grasp of the Wampanoag language, which came as a product both of his profession as a preacher and his upbringing on Martha's Vineyard and essentially within the communities there. The depth with which the language penetrated the lives of people like the Mayhews can be seen in an interaction Experience had with a Wampanoag man on Martha's Vineyard. In 1756, he wrote a brief

²²Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 241.

²³ Laura A. Leibman, "Tradition and Innovation in a Colonial Wampanoag Family from Martha's Vineyard," in *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology*, ed. Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss, (Amherst, MA, 2007), 195.

letter to Joseph Coomes, most likely here a descendant of Hiaccomes and a member of the powerful Coomes-Amos family. The letter, no more than three lines, simply alerted Coomes to a meeting happening on Thursday. However, it was nevertheless written in Wampanoag, revealing an active use of it by Mayhew well into the eighteenth century, at a time when English would probably have been acceptable to use.²⁴ By continuing to defer to Wampanoag, even in mundane situations like this, Mayhew signals that Wampanoag use was not simply a formal act, brought out in church for conversion. Instead, Mayhew, like Williams and Gookin before him, saw the importance of the Wampanoag language, and the power that came with it.

English examples of Wampanoag use certainly show a respect for the language, but more important than that is the continued use of the language by the community, and the various ways the Wampanoag themselves utilized their language to assert their autonomy against colonial pressures. Mayhew and other English sources note many examples of Wampanoag language use by the community, ranging from the early seventeenth century well into the nineteenth. As shown above, the Wampanoag of Aquinnah still predominately used their own language well into the 1750s. Perhaps even more impressive though is the evidence of the Mashpee Wampanoag also asserting their linguistic autonomy in the 1720's, despite being much closer to the epicenter of colonization and not having the Vineyard Sound to act as a cultural moat. In 1724, Samuel Sewall noted that Reverend Joseph Bourne, the minister at the Mashpee church for several years, could not get the people of Mashpee to assemble for his sermons "unless he will preach to them in their own language."²⁵ Even as late as 1753, the people of Mashpee sent a letter in Wampanoag to the Commissioners of the New England

²⁴ Ives Goddard and Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusetts*, pt. 1, (Philadelphia, 1988), 223.

²⁵ Samuel Sewall to William Ashhurst, October 6, 1724, NE Co. Recs. 7955/2, p. 10, in David Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 397.

Company on behalf of their current minister Solomon Briant, a Wampanoag of their community. In the letter, they exclaim that they “have peace from [Solomon],” and that they “desire that he may teach [them] the gospel.” The Company had been pushing an English schoolmaster to come take over, but people of Mashpee firmly state “we have no need for him yet, because we cannot understand him, only a few can.”²⁶ These examples show that the Wampanoag continue to use their language in both personal religious capacities, but also as a political tool to demand action while simultaneously asserting their autonomy.

Although the Wampanoag and English missionaries initially devised Wampanoag as a written language for religious reasons, the community quickly adopted and repurposed it for other, notably political purposes. They used written technology to their advantage, pairing it with their own language to produce wills, petitions, and deeds that affirmed their authority and autonomy within and outside of the colonial and later the early Republican government. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Wampanoag continued to use their language in these political contexts, producing European-style documents that retained their own identity. This hybrid system became common, especially in the praying towns that Wampanoag and church officials had established to both spread the faith, but also to protect Wampanoag land against further encroachment. In 1715, one of these towns, Natick, issued an ordinance in Wampanoag that outlawed the sale of timber to any Englishman.²⁷ The law was explicit: their timber fell under their jurisdiction. The law was for them, in their own language, affirming their autonomy both over their property and their governance.

²⁶ Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusetts*, pt. 1, 179.

²⁷ Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusetts*, pt. 1, 329.

Another important document entered the record in 1703. That year, the Wampanoag of Aquinnah presented a will to the English authorities that they claimed their late sachem Mittark had drafted in 1681. The will states that their land shall be theirs forever, and “that no one shall sell land,” and if they did the sale would be invalid, and whomever sold it would be deposed.²⁸ The document may have been inauthentic, but it remains a political statement. The primacy of the written word when it came to legal documents, especially wills and land deeds, had weighed heavily in the English’s favor. The Wampanoag of Martha’s Vineyard, in producing this “will,” despite its unorthodox style and contentious origin, clearly understand this dynamic, and were using the same practices against the colonists. By using tools of the English legal system, they are challenging the colonial notion of justice, and by producing the will in their own language, they are asserting their political autonomy outside of that system.²⁹ Wampanoag writings also often preserved the inflections and oral speech patterns that were unique to the language. These techniques included repetition, and the tendency to use short sentence structures that would be easy to memorize.³⁰ Mittark’s will contains both of these techniques, as well as the phonetic rendering of his name, which reveals the pronunciation, and lends to the belief that the will was probably dictated as oration and then written down.³¹ The patterned use in the signature, Mittark signing “I, Umutaag, this is my hand,” as the sachem, fits into the existing ritual pattern that the Wampanoag would use in land transfers.³² In using these techniques, Wampanoag on Martha’s

²⁸ Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusetts*, pt. 1, 97.

²⁹ David J. Silverman, “‘We Chief Men Say This’ Wampanoag Memory, English Authority, and the Contest over Mittark’s Will,” in *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology*, ed. Kristina Bross and Hilary E. Wyss, (Amherst, MA, 2007), 166.

³⁰ Mifflin, “Closing the Circle”, 352.

³¹ Silverman, “‘We Chief Men Say This’” in *Early Native Literacies in New England*, ed. Bross and Wyss, 169-170.

³² Goddard and Bragdon, *Native Writings in Massachusetts*, pt. 1, 97 & Stephanie Fitzgerald, “‘I Wunnatuckquannum, This Is My Hand’: Native Performance in Massachusetts Language Indian Deeds” in *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603-1832*, ed. Joshua David Bellin and Laura L. Mielke, (Lincoln, 2011), 146.

Vineyard were maintaining their linguistic sovereignty, while also harnessing the power of the written word to assert their continued autonomy.

As the language began to fade under the increasing pressure of colonial oppression, the importance of it to the community, to its sense of culture and sense of self, shone through in several accounts. One in particular came from Martha's Vineyard. In 1821, Zachariah Howwoswee, the last Indigenous minister on the island to preach in the Wampanoag language, died. The community later recounted his preaching in Wampanoag and mentioned that "he would talk to them very solemnly in the Indian tongue, and they would cry and he would cry."³³ The account goes on to say that "the decay of the Indian language and custom meant much to him. With an Indian's shrewdness he perceived that to preserve his race as a complete entity, he must hold fast the bond of language; and he spent his strength in an unavailing effort to maintain this Indian language, at least in the church service."³⁴ Language remained important to the Wampanoag, and, it seems, they had a sense of its role in preserving their cultural identity.

The decline of the Wampanoag language came with the rise of English as the language of power in the United States. In the later eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, colonial authorities began to see Indigenous languages as a marker of ability and civility. Language, it would seem, had become a part of the larger debate of race and aptitude.³⁵ Eliminating Indigenous language use became a prime directive of people like Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of Carlisle Indian School, who championed

³³ Edward S. Burgess, "The Old South Road of Gay Head," *Dukes County Intelligencer*, 12 (1970): 22.

³⁴ Edward S. Burgess, "The Old South Road of Gay Head," *Dukes County Intelligencer*, 12 (1970): 22-23.

³⁵ Sean P. Harvey, "'Must Not Their Languages Be Savage and Barbarous Like Them?' Philology, Indian Removal, and Race Science," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 30, No. 4 (Winter 2010), 507 & Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 96-97.

the strategy of civilizing Indigenous peoples. These schools became the most popular and effective strategy for Americans to strip Indigenous children of their cultural heritage. The combination of long periods of time spent away from the community and the humiliation they suffered for speaking their own languages meant children were quickly losing the ability to speak.³⁶ The Wampanoag language had been in decline long before Carlisle opened, but several Wampanoag members did attend Carlisle, furthering the damage already done.³⁷ Forced acculturation was the policy of the day, and language, as one of the most overt signs of Indigenous identity, was an obvious target.

Coupled with intentional moves by Euro-Americans to minimize Indigenous language use were the seemingly unintended consequences of colonization. Although these were not the focus of colonial efforts, they were nevertheless part of directed attacks on Indigenous land and sovereignty. These consequences stem chiefly from the colonial taking of land, which resulted in displacement, a loss of subsistence ability, and the dissolution of a community base.³⁸ One of the components of this was the fracturing and changing of communities. Wars decimated populations and led to a heavy increase in colonial enslavement practices. Fearing more violence, many of the men captured in these conflicts were sold outside of the colonies, increasingly replaced by African slaves from the Caribbean.³⁹ This demographic shift in the region had lasting consequences to Indigenous communities in the area that were only exacerbated as colonial pressure mounted. Throughout the eighteenth century, Indigenous men left their communities to big coastal cities looking for work. There they fell in with the ranks of people from across

³⁶ Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 63-64.

³⁷ "Student Records," Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, accessed December 14, 2021, (accessed at https://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/student_records).

³⁸ Jeffrey Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas*, (New Haven, 2019), 22.

³⁹ Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America*, (New York, 2016).

the Atlantic world and beyond who were all participating in the budding maritime trades, and particularly the whaling industry. This development had two major consequences for Indigenous languages. First, the men in these trades became part of a cosmopolitan microcosm of the world, with languages from all over mixing and vying for supremacy. It is unlikely that they would be using Wampanoag much on these voyages, slowly but surely fading it out.⁴⁰ In addition, men exiting the community at rapid rates, either from slavery, seeking employment, or, morbidly, death, created a demographic imbalance. Increasingly, Wampanoag women decided to marry outside of the community to counteract this, bringing African Americans as well as Euro-Americans into the fold. These outsiders could also be from elsewhere, brought to New England by the very maritime trades that took the community's own men away. They most likely would not have known Wampanoag, and the new multiethnic communities created from these relationships led to the decline in language use.⁴¹

Combined with voluntary participation in maritime industries was the insidious practice of indentured servitude. The practice affected all facets of the Wampanoag community, from men and women down to their children. And these indentures also had deleterious effects on language use. Debts often became so bad that people would have to indenture their children. These contracts could last upwards of 18 years, with the children living with English families for most of their lives. Having not used their own

⁴⁰ David J. Silverman, "Losing the Language: The Decline of Algonquian Tongues and the Challenge of Indian Identity in Southern New England," in *Papers of the 31st Annual Algonquian Conference*, ed. John D. Nichols, (Winnipeg, 2000), 356-57.

⁴¹ Jason R. Mancini, "Beyond Reservation: Indians, Maritime Labor, and Communities of Color from Eastern Long Island Sound, 1713-1861," *Connecticut History Review*, 54, Iss. 1 (Spring 2015), 159. & Daniel R. Mandell, *Tribe, Race, History: Native Americans in Southern New England, 1780-1880*, (Baltimore, 2010), 43.

language for much of their formative years, children would often lose the ability or desire to speak in their own language.⁴²

Even adult indenturing contributed to the decline in Wampanoag language use. The Mashpee minister Solomon Briant, mentioned above in the letter by the Mashpee Wampanoag to the New England Company and known for preaching in the Wampanoag language, found in the mid eighteenth century that he could not pay his debts, and signed on for a year-long whaling voyage. Upon his return, his preaching schedule lapsed, and he gave sermons with far less frequency. Because of this gap, and while he was away, the community was forced to turn to sermons in English delivered by a white minister, Gideon Hawley.⁴³ Sermons and education, which had traditionally been in Wampanoag, were now given in English, and as the older generation died, the younger generation used the language with less frequency, until finally in the mid nineteenth century, there appeared to be only a handful left.⁴⁴

Another factor that led to the decline of the Wampanoag language was a deliberate increase in English use among the Wampanoag and other tribes. There were certainly mounting pressures to use English instead of their native tongue, but there was also a strong push by Indigenous peoples themselves to proactively use English to achieve their aims. The shift in power to English would have been obvious to many Wampanoag, and, like they had done years before with written language, they coopted this tool to use for their own purposes. Famous New England natives Samson Occom and William Apess used English to assert Indigenous identity to a Euro-American audience that would not have understood their languages and had been developing their

⁴² Silverman, "Losing the Language," 353.

⁴³ Mark A. Nichols, "Mashpee Wampanoags of Cape Cod, the Whalefishery, and Seafaring's Impact on Community Development" *American Indian Quarterly*, 26, Iss. 2, (Spring 2002): 165-197.

⁴⁴ Silverman, "Losing the Language," 359.

own reductive ideas about Indigenous culture that the two may have wished to dispel.⁴⁵

In addition, they used English to assert Indigenous autonomy against a colonial, and later American government that was imposing more control over Indigenous land and affairs than ever. In 1833, Apess, himself a Mohegan like Occom, traveled to Mashpee, where he helped them draft a petition to send to the Massachusetts government concerning the abuses they were suffering at the hands of the government-appointed overseers, as well as by local white Americans. The petition ended with three resolutions, chief among them being a call for self-rule, followed by a declaration that they would not allow any outsiders to come take wood from their land.⁴⁶ This petition mirrors those sent by Mashpee and Aquinnah to the Bay Colony government nearly a century earlier, but this time it was in English. In making this shift, Apess and the Mashpee were trying to get through to the government to stop the rising tide of exploitation, but the victory would prove short-lived, as colonial pressures continued to mount. Other Indigenous nations followed a similar path, taking advantage of English to maintain their sovereignty. Tatanka-lyotanka or Sitting Bull, as perhaps the most famous Native American in popular culture, regularly recruited Sioux boys who had been educated in English to take notes at various councils discussing land sales to prevent any deception by their white opponents. Euro-Americans had been using the gap in language to take coerce Indigenous populations into signing land sales ever since they had arrived on the continent, and Sitting Bull, sensing the power of English in this situation, took advantage.⁴⁷ By making these switches to English, the Wampanoag and other Indigenous populations were using the tools of the colonizers to try and stop their

⁴⁵ Drew Lopenzina, *Red Ink: Native Americans Picking up the Pen in the Colonial Period*, (New York, 2012), 2.

⁴⁶ Donald M. Nielsen "The Mashpee Indian Revolt of 1833" *The New England Quarterly*, 58, 3 (September 1985), 408

⁴⁷ Fear-Segal, *White Man's Club*, 58.

abuses. However, it would lead to an even greater loss, as the language, fading out of use, would soon be gone.

By the twentieth century, Wampanoag seems to have all but disappeared from the public ear. There were perhaps native speakers still, who had simply learned to hide their knowledge from colonial eyes, and vocabulary most likely still survived in rituals, stories, and generational sharing. Mashpee Wampanoag claim their last native speaker was still alive in 1950.⁴⁸ Pockets of the language remained into the 1920's on Martha's Vineyard, where at least one report confirms at least one hundred Wampanoag words were still understood and frequently used by a significant portion of the population.⁴⁹ But ultimately, fluency would disappear. And then, thanks to significant work and interest by the community, it came back. The Language Reclamation Project has meant a great deal to many community members, who have celebrated the return of the language as "a whole understanding of life," and a window into culture and knowledge. Others express how "ways of being, living, interacting with the world, are explicit in the language," and jessie little doe baird herself notes that, among other benefits, language use gives people "a better understanding of their own people and the motivations of their own people and the processes that take place within the community."⁵⁰ For many reasons, language reclamation has been incredibly important to Wampanoag culture and identity. However, the return of the Wampanoag language does not simply mark an assertion of culture for the internal preservation of the community. While it has proven to be important in this way, both traditionally and today, it also works as a political

⁴⁸ Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 398.

⁴⁹ Silverman, "Losing the Language," 360.

⁵⁰ Claire Ogden, "Assonet Wampanoag Educator," ; Jack Brook, "A Language, Liberated: White settlers silenced the Wôpanâak language for generations. Nitana Hicks Greendeer '03 is a leader in the effort to bring it back." *Brown Alumni Magazine*, (September-October 2020); and Kauanui and Warrior, *Speaking of Indigenous Politics*, 8.

statement, an assertion of autonomy and sovereignty for the outside world. Revitalizing Indigenous languages is itself an act of decolonization: in returning to native languages, Indigenous communities are actively relinquishing the language of the colonizers who have oppressed them, in this case English.⁵¹ Language use can also create a more coherent sense of self as separate from the larger colonial society. In favoring traditional mother tongues rather than that of the larger body, community members can create a boundary between themselves and the non-Indigenous community around them, which helps strengthen internal bonds, while also signaling to the external community this separation exists.⁵² This latter aspect would become crucial in the years to come.

The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project is an example of language use to assert political identity and actively work towards decolonization. In doing so, the community members continue centuries of Wampanoag assertions of autonomy, identity, and sovereignty. From Pometacom, to William Apess, to Frank Wamsutta James, the Wampanoag, or in Apess's case a Mohegan on behalf of the Wampanoag, have shown that they are unique, that they are alive, and that they deserve to be recognized. This fight carried on into the twentieth century and was given an extra spark in the latter half. By the 1970s, Indigenous civil rights movements had coalesced into the Red Power Movement. Focusing on assertions of being and identity, the movement built upon the work of Apess, but more closely of a generation of Native American intellectuals and activists, including Sarah Winnemucca, Charles Eastman, and Vine Deloria. Combining their rhetorical strategies for political sovereignty with strategies from the other civil rights movements of the era, the Red Power movement sought to not only

⁵¹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed., (London, 2012), 38.

⁵² Droogendyk and Wright, "A social psychological examination of the empowering role of language in Indigenous resistance," 305.

show that Indigenous communities were still there, but that they had inherent rights within and outside the laws of the US that were to be respected.⁵³ The movement stressed the uniqueness of Indigenous culture as well as the separateness of their political identities. Helen Attaquin, a Wampanoag, put it thusly: "The survival of Indians as peoples with a unique political and cultural identity is the goal of the Indians' rights movement, and, while some characterize that as separatism, Indians tend to see this only as the continuation of their traditional existence."⁵⁴ Other tribal members like Paula Peters remember the early days of the movement. In reference to her father, Russell Peters, who was president of the Tribal Council from 1974-1980, Paula recalls him telling her "the time had come for Native people to begin to take back our culture and traditions."⁵⁵ One of the main strategies of the movement, therefore, would be to assert this political autonomy through examples of unique cultural identity. And one of the most concrete ways to do this was through Indigenous language use.⁵⁶

The Wampanoag participated in and drew inspiration from this movement, their involvement signified by Frank Wamsutta James's speech, delivered in protest from Cole's Hill in Plymouth. Wamsutta had been invited to speak by the planners of the Thanksgiving Day celebration in town, commemorating the 350th anniversary of the first Thanksgiving, but the committee rejected his speech as too inflammatory. So, he instead delivered it to an Indigenous crowd, marking the first "National Day of Mourning," and asserting to all who were around that the Wampanoag were still there. He states that "although time has drained our culture, and our language is almost extinct, we the

⁵³ James D. Rice, "'Beyond 'The Ecological Indian' and 'Virgin Soil Epidemics': New Perspectives on Native Americans and the Environment," *History Compass*, 12 Iss. 9, (September 2014), 746.

⁵⁴ Siobhan Senier ed., *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Indigenous Writing from New England*, (Lincoln, 2014), 399.

⁵⁵ Senier, *Dawnland Voices*, 411.

⁵⁶ Maximilian Viatori and Gloria Ushigua, "Speaking Sovereignty: Indigenous Languages and Self-Determination," *Wicazo Sa Review*, 22, No. 2 (Fall, 2007), 12.

Wampanoags still walk the lands of Massachusetts,” and that “we still have the spirit, we still have the unique culture, we still have the will and, most important of all, the determination to remain as Indians.” Wamsutta’s assertions of identity and sovereignty echoed those of the larger movement, but also of people like Apess and the countless other Wampanoag before him.⁵⁷

One of the major aspects of the movement, and one typified by Frank Wamsutta James’s speech, was the idea of Native Americans asserting their voices, collectively speaking out against colonial oppression and for their own autonomy. This manifested in a slew of Indigenous newspapers, which not only produced journalism surrounding the Movement and Indigenous issues, but also published many articles, poems, histories, and stories from regular people. By promoting the voices of ordinary people, the Red Power newspapers were grounding their power in Indigenous oral tradition. Many of them may have been using English, but they were connecting to their tribe and community, and the larger Indigenous community, through their voice. As one contributing author to *Americans Before Columbus*’s section “Our Many Voices” put it, “I want to be heard, heard as an Indian. . . . I speak as my grandfather, an echo from the past.”⁵⁸ Although not always in their language, Indigenous resistance during the Red Power movement sought to assert Indigenous power and continuity through their voices.

The Red Power movement revitalized Wampanoag fights for political and cultural autonomy. From there, assertions of culture and identity became far more common, and took on political as well as cultural dimensions. In 1976, a group of Mashpee

⁵⁷ The Suppressed Speech of Wamsutta (Frank B.) James, Wampanoag,” *United American Indians of New England*, (September 10, 1970), & Silverman, *This Land is Their Land*, 13-15.

⁵⁸ Tim Field, “You Are Indian, of Today,” *Americans Before Columbus* 2, No. 3 (August–December 1970): 12 in Seonghoon Kim, “We Have Always Had These Many Voices’: Red Power Newspapers and a Community of Poetic Resistance,” *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Summer 2015), pp. 271-301.

Wampanoag began living in the reconstructed Wampanoag village called Twelve Acres. It became a small community, and they participated in activities such as “Indian education classes” and “potluck dinners.” They also used traditional fishing areas to produce food for the group.⁵⁹ Later that year, they held a traditional drum circle that led to noise complaints and resulted in the convergence of several police officers at the scene. The group was forcefully arrested, although the charges were later dropped.⁶⁰ The episode, although brief, highlights the increased political awareness of the group, and how assertions of cultural autonomy accompanied these statements.

The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project also came on the heels of a very public court battle in which identity and cultural continuity were the deciding factors. In 1976, the Mashpee Tribe filed a land claims suit against the town of Mashpee and several real estate and development companies. The suit alleged that land sales had happened illegally, especially between 1834 and 1870, citing the 1790 Federal Nonintercourse Act, wherein “No purchase, grant, lease, or other conveyance of lands, or of any title or claim thereto, from any Indian nation or tribe of Indians, shall be of any validity in law or equity, unless the same be made by treaty or convention entered into pursuant to the Constitution.”⁶¹ The suit hinged on cultural continuity and identity: could the Mashpee Wampanoag prove to a group of jurors that they were a tribe, that they were “Indian” enough?⁶² The result was bleak: the jury found the Mashpee group was not considered a tribe in 1790, nor were they a tribe from 1870 up to the present.⁶³

⁵⁹ United States Department of the Interior, Office of Federal Acknowledgement, “Summary under the Criteria for the Proposed Finding on the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian Tribal Council, Inc.,” 68.

⁶⁰ Office of Federal Acknowledgement, “Summary under the Criteria for the Proposed Finding on the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian Tribal Council, Inc.,” 68.

⁶¹ Mashpee Tribe v. New Seabury Corp., 592 F.2d 575, 578 (1st Cir. 1979).

⁶² James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Literature, Ethnography, and Art*, (Cambridge, MA, 1988), 284.

⁶³ Mashpee Tribe v. New Seabury Corp.

The court ruling challenged the Mashpee Wampanoag's sovereignty and their identity. In declaring them not a tribe at the time in question, the court had decided that, to the outside world, the Mashpee were not "Indian" enough. Despite an internal feeling of sovereignty, external appearances and desires for cultural continuity had been a deciding factor.⁶⁴ In addition, their claim had been rejected because they were not recognized by the federal government as an official tribe. The Mashpee would spend the next several decades attempting to gain recognition from the government in order to preserve the land they did have, and once again they would need to convince outsiders that they were indeed a unique tribe. The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project was part of this lengthy plan: as an external assertion of identity, it was another in a long line of political expressions of autonomy and sovereignty.

Federal recognition was therefore a significant aspect of Wampanoag assertions of sovereignty, and would aid in land retention, as well as cultural ventures like the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project. However, recognition is a contentious issue: in a country that has spent centuries promoting and forcing assimilation, to now offer aid to tribes on the grounds of cultural and communal distinctiveness seems hypocritical. Recognition does carry with it the ability for a tribe to govern oneself, federal funding and projects, and federal protection of land, including the ability to keep tribal land in trust, protecting it from alienation, both from outside the community and potentially from within. In addition, recognition brings funding for language projects, as well as grants that can be used for affordable housing for tribal members. In order to gain federal recognition, a tribe must uphold seven criteria that have been established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of Federal Acknowledgement. These include the requirement that

⁶⁴ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 339.

the group “has maintained political influence or authority over its members as an autonomous entity from historical times until the present,” that it “has been identified as an American Indian entity on a substantially continuous basis since 1900,” and that “a predominant portion of the petitioning group comprises a *distinct community* and has existed as a community from historical times until the present.”⁶⁵ The Mashpee Wampanoag first submitted their petition in 1975, but it would not be accepted until 2007. During that time, outsiders continued to flock to Cape Cod, and those in Mashpee had to continue to assert their cultural distinctness, in an increasingly public way.

According to the guidelines for recognition, language retention is not a requirement for federal recognition. However, it goes on to cite in several places that language “is very strong evidence for tribal continuity,” and places it along with a geographical settlement and continuous intertribal marriages as the easiest ways to show community distinction.⁶⁶ Language, while not an overt requirement, is therefore a strong indicator of a tribe’s communal continuity in the eyes of the federal government. Indeed, the 2005 edition of the Acknowledgement Precedent Manual, compiled by the Office of Federal Acknowledgment, cites several examples of accepted evidence for tribal recognition that all involve language use. These include the Potawatomi language, the Choctaw language, the Michiff language, and the Snoqualmie language.⁶⁷ Therefore, although language retention is not explicitly required, it is one of the easiest and most effective ways to show cultural distinction. In this way, language serves to both

⁶⁵ Testimony of Bryan Newland, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of The Assistant Secretary For Indian Affairs, United States Department of The Interior, To The Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate, Oversight Hearing on Federal Acknowledgement: Political and Legal, Relationship Between Governments, July 12, 2012.

⁶⁶ Bureau of Indian Affairs, Official Guidelines to the Federal Acknowledgement Regulations, 48-49.

⁶⁷ Office of Federal Acknowledgment U.S. Department of the Interior, “Acknowledgment Precedent Manual” (2005), 102-103.

differentiate the community internally and externally: the tribal members are affirmed of their uniqueness, as is the outside world.

When the Mashpee petition was finally accepted in 2007, the Language Reclamation Project had been around for more than a decade. However, fights for sovereignty continue, as the Mashpee land is constantly challenged to this day. In 2020 the federal government attempted to take the Wampanoag land out of trust, removing their sovereignty over it. Despite this challenge, wielding their recognition, their cultural autonomy, and their tribal sovereignty, the tribal leaders have come out on top. Since then, the project has only grown. The community offers open courses from beginner to advanced, there are after school programs for kids, and even an elders “lunch & learn” programs, all free of charge for tribal members. Mashpee high school began offering a course in Wampanoag in 2017, and now offers three progressive levels. As of this year, Mashpee Middle School is offering a pilot program, ensuring that grades 7-12 now offer Wampanoag courses.⁶⁸ Baird’s daughter, now an MIT graduate too, has developed an online learning tool called *Kun8seeh* to help grow the language even more. Last year, a student at Mashpee High qualified to earn the State Seal of Biliteracy in Wampanoag.⁶⁹ The Wampanoag language serves the same purposes today as it did in the time of Ousamequin, and of Mittark, and of Joseph Coomes. Language helps foster group cohesion, group identity, and group knowledge. It connects a person to their land, to their neighbors, and to their ancestors. It orders the very world around them, shaping every thought, every interaction. And, it shows the outside world that the community is distinct, that they are autonomous, and that they have their own sovereignty. Language

⁶⁸ “Community Classes & Programs,” Wampanoag Language Reclamation Project, 2021, accessed December 14, 2021 (<https://www.wlrp.org/community-classes>).

⁶⁹ Jessica Hill, “Oral History: Indigenous linguists use endangered language to connect Wampanoag members to their roots,” Cape Cod Times, Hyannis, Feb. 22, 2021 & “Mashpee Student Qualifies for State Seal Test for Wampanoag Biliteracy,” In This Place, CAI, July 19, 2020.

Inside and Out
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is power, in both the material and the spiritual, and the Wampanoag have taken that power back.

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Dawnland Power: The Wabanaki Confederacy and Indigenous Exploitation of Imperial Competition in King William's War

In the early 1690s, as war ravaged both the northeastern corner of North America and Western Europe, John Nelson, a well-known Boston merchant and politician, sat in a jail cell in the Bastille and contemplated his future. An established statesman between the French and British in New England, Nelson had been placed in charge of establishing Colonel Edward Tyng in command of the newly captured Port Royal in Nova Scotia in 1691. However, he was soon after apprehended by a French ship and taken, first to Quebec, and then to France, spending time in Angouleme before ending up in the Bastille. But, owing to Nelson's wealth and esteem, he was allowed to consult with members of the aristocracy about his release, including the Marquis de Cahury, and a "Mr. de Lagny, the Intendant Generell of the Commerce & Foreign affairs of France." Together, they decided that the situation in North America was bleak for both the British and the French, owing to the "Barbarous cruelty of the Heathen," and that they should propose a treaty to end hostilities and renegotiate their mutual holdings there. However, since the French King was away fighting and did not recognize King William, the conspirators decided that the North American governors would make the decisions, to be ratified later by the sovereigns. According to Nelson, all was agreed upon by the French officials, and it appeared that he would soon be free and on his way home to stop the war. But, these plans came crashing down when a ship from Canada brought six North American Sagamores to Paris. At their direction, the Canada Company protested Nelson's release and proposition, which the magistrates acquiesced to, leaving Nelson to remain in jail and wonder what could have been.¹

¹ John Nelson, "Letter to Charles Talbot, 1695," Massachusetts Historical Society, Ms. N-573.

The above story is revealed in a letter from John Nelson to the Duke of Shrewsbury in 1695 after his release from French captivity, relating events that had occurred in the years prior. As war continued to rage across the continent, Nelson was much more concerned with the conflict happening across the ocean in North America. Since 1688, the English had been at war with the French in the region, and, far more importantly, with the Indigenous groups of the northeast in an area known as the Dawnland, who would collectively coalesce and become known as the Wabanaki Confederacy. Laden with self-promotion and speculation, Nelson's account nevertheless reveals one key aspect of the conflict, one that has often been lost on scholars of the era since. The conflict, and the English's pitiful state within it, was dictated by the Indigenous nations of the Dawnland, not the imperial colonies.

Nelson wrote his letter during King William's War, a conflict fought between various Indigenous groups in North America, mainly the Wabanaki Confederacy and the Haudenosaunee, and the British and French, from roughly 1688 to 1699. The conflict can be seen as a series of proxy wars, as the Wabanaki fought the British, the British fought the French, and the French fought the Haudenosaunee, all tentatively tied to the Nine Years War, occurring nearly simultaneously in Europe between France and Britain, along with the League of Augsburg. King William's War, often overlooked in favor of King Philip's War (1675-1678) and the French and Indian Wars of the eighteenth century, exhibits a unique situation in North America, where Indigenous groups like the Wabanaki were able to not only manipulate empires for their own gain, but assert their authority over the region and the imperial colonies who tried to claim ownership of the land. Indigenous history in New England often follows a similar scholastic path, beginning with European contact, exploring the early relationships and interactions based around attempted European settlement, and the subsequent breakdown of said relationships

into a slow decline that saw Indigenous power slowly fading. A few key markers are generally highlighted along the way: the so-called Thanksgiving Alliance of 1621, King Phillip's War, and then the French and Indian Wars of the eighteenth century. However, this timeline is fraught for many reasons, not least of which is the crafted narrative of Indigenous disappearance that has permeated historical memory despite obvious Indigenous survivance. Another important problem is the belief that Indigenous history simply follows along with European events. Blending incidences like King Philip's War into the conflicts of the eighteenth century diminishes the individuality of both, as well as that of the groups that were involved in them. King William's War involved Indigenous groups in present day Maine and Canada as well as New York who did not lose in the 1676 conflict and were not subject to British control. In fact, the Wabanaki Confederacy exerted power over the British colonists to such a degree that they extracted an annual tribute from them as a consequence of King Philip's War. This was far from the dynamic in southern New England at the end of the seventeenth century, and demands examination.

In addition, eliding King William's War into either the eighteenth century French and Indian Wars, or even the European imperial conflict of the Nine Years War, reduces the violence to a struggle between imperial powers waged in a distant theater, with indigenous groups simply playing the part of allies. Instead, the Wabanaki Confederacy were themselves the major power in the area, and they waged war for their own designs and purposes, using the European struggle to leverage their position and achieve their own goals. Ignoring or reducing King William's War overlooks a fundamental aspect of Indigenous history in the northeast: the tribes in the area dictated the course of events to the end of the century and beyond. The British did not secure the region with King Philip's War, nor did the French thwart their expansion themselves. Instead, imperial

colonies were pawns on a chessboard between powers that had been established on the continent long before any European regent had heard tale of beaver pelt or unspoiled wilderness.

Traditional scholarship throughout the early twentieth century, if it mentioned King William's War at all, mentioned the conflict as the North American theater of a European struggle, that the French and the British were simply fighting each other using Indigenous groups as their pawns in conjunction with their battles across the ocean. Authors like Everts Greene perpetuated such a belief in his 1905 work *Provincial America, 1690-1740*. Others gloss over the conflict on the way to the eighteenth century and the "French and Indian Wars" that characterized it, choosing to focus on later wars instead (see Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*). Still more chose to focus on the conflict that preceded this. There have been countless books, articles, dissertations, and theses about King Philip's War, with most focusing on the events and fighting in southern New England. Few give attention to the northern theaters of that war, or what happened there after Pometacom's death. And, if they do speak of the northern borderlands, they treat it with a tenuous finality, sometimes paradoxically declaring that King Philip's War ended European economic relations with Indigenous groups in the northeast, and subsequently their power and even their very existence (see Howard Peckham's *The Colonial Wars 1689-1762*). This despite a record of continued conflict with the very same groups well into the eighteenth century.²

Scholars like Jenny Hale Pulsipher and Matthew Bahar have both highlighted Indigenous power in the region during King William's War, exploring Wabanaki dominance before and during the conflict. However, Pulsipher focuses more on the

² Everts Boutell Greene, *Provincial America, 1690-1740*, (New York, 1905), Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield*, (Amherst, 2003), and Howard Peckham, *The Colonial Wars 1689-1762*, (Chicago, 1964).

contest for authority in the lead up to the conflict, and Bahar favors the Indigenous use of naval power to assert authority over a much longer period.³ This piece will focus on both Indigenous assertions of power and authority in the region, but also their exploitation of the imperial competition happening around them and far away across the ocean. Indigenous understanding of European conflict, hierarchy, and religion allowed them to play the middle, benefiting from both groups but being beholden to neither. Also important to the imperial story was the competition over the geographic fiction of regional control. British and French agents, missionaries, and royal commissioners were all interested in controlling the region's resources and peoples. The reality of power and the nominal extension of European imperial sovereignty were two different things, but much of the traditional scholarship on this topic has fallen into the established trap of reading imperial histories backward and as fact. Jeffers Lennox attempts to tackle this problem of created fictions in *Homeland and Empires*, exposing the tenuous connection these European groups had to the land and the reality of the situation on the ground.⁴

This paper will rely heavily on treaties, as well as letters and accounts by British and French officials, merchants, servicemen, and settlers. Through these documents I will attempt to discern not only European views of their Indigenous allies and adversaries, but also how they believe the other side views and treats the Indigenous population. Accounts like John Nelson's letter describe in detail his beliefs about French treatment of Indigenous groups and why they have more success in achieving alliances, revealing more about British anxieties and networking strategies than anything else. By comparing such accounts, I will attempt to show the rift between European reality and

³ Matthew R. Bahar, *Storm of the Seas: Indians & Empires in the Atlantic Age of Sail*, (New York, 2019) & Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "Dark Cloud Rising from the East": Indian Sovereignty and the Coming of King William's War in New England," *The New England Quarterly*, 80, No. 4 (Dec., 2007), pp. 588-613.

⁴ Jeffers Lennox, *Homelands and Empires: Indigenous Spaces, Imperial Fictions, and Competition for Territory in Northeastern North America, 1690-1763*, (Toronto, 2017).

perception that Indigenous groups were able to exploit. In addition, treaties and petitions will show the power groups like the Wabanaki held in the region before, during, and after the war. Through violence and shrewd diplomacy, the Wabanaki were able to maintain control of their home even when it seemed the European tide could not be kept at bay. Treaties as recorded by European sources are inherently biased and may not tell the whole story. But through examining what was agreed, what was gained and lost, and what was or was not claimed by European powers, we are able to discern Indigenous victories. I will not be focusing too much on the minutia of battles and the events of the war. The war was mostly fought as small-scale skirmishes and ambush attacks against garrisons and towns in Maine and the northeast, and detailing all these attacks would be repetitive and not contribute to the overall understanding of the war. Instead, I will attempt to explore how Indigenous strategies displayed Indigenous power to colonists, and how their use of violence helped them assert their continued authority over the region.

I will be focusing mostly on the Indigenous groups to the northeast of Boston that constitute the Wabanaki Confederacy. These include the Mi'Kmaq, Panawahpskek (Penobscot), Wəlastəkwewiyik (Maliseet), the Peskotomahkati (Passamaquoddy), and the Abenaki. In an effort to streamline the article I will mainly be referring to the group as the Wabanaki Confederacy when speaking about them as a whole, but will specify the tribal affiliation whenever I am able. I have chosen to focus more on the Wabanaki and their conflict with the English colonists rather than the Haudenosaunee's struggles against the French because often the Indigenous groups in the east are often written out of history after King Philip's War, while the groups further to the west maintain their position in the popular imagination long after. That is not to say the Haudenosaunee's role in the war is not important, and they themselves would use their relationship with the

English to settle old scores with the French and the Abenaki, wounds which had remained open throughout the seventeenth century Beaver Wars. But, to remain focused, this paper will look east to the Dawnland.

Rather than a slow decline of Indigenous autonomy after King Philip's War, the Indigenous nations of the Dawnland continued to exert control over the regions of Maine and southern Canada, asserting their power and authority against imperial encroachment while simultaneously taking advantage of imperial competition for their own material and political benefit. King William's War is the culmination of this situation, with the Wabanaki Confederacy using imperial competition to fortify their position as the dominant group in the region, waging war against the English for their transgressions, and using the French as avenues of material gain. By the end of the conflict, the Wabanaki had once again subjugated English colonists and their governments, forcing them to submit to continued Indigenous regional control in Maine, and dictating how the relationship proceeded from there. Additionally, they continued to play the English and French against one another to ensure they would continue to extract material wealth and power from their relationships with both. King William's War and its aftermath show that Indigenous power ruled the Dawnland, and that groups like the Wabanaki Confederacy recognized their place within the Atlantic world and exploited European competition accordingly.

As the traditional narrative goes, the summer of 1676 was a turning point in King Philip's War that signaled the end of the struggle in southern New England. Diminishing food supplies, a weary populace, and the deaths of several leaders are all pointed to as signs that the conflict was ending.⁵ And, with the death of Pometacom, the Indigenous

⁵ Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*, (New Haven, 2018), 302 & Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects Unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England*, (Philadelphia, 2006), 201-205.

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fight was all but doomed. However, off to the north, the conflict was just heating up: the Wabanaki were collectively raining terror down upon the towns on the northern border. As the colonists of southern New England were celebrating victory, their comrades remained under constant threat. In 1676, Massachusetts tried to settle the conflict with the Wabanaki, drawing up a treaty for Mogg Heigon, the Saco Sagamore, to sign on behalf of the other Penobscots whilst he was alone in Boston. The treaty included stipulations that demanded the Indigenous groups return all property taken during the war, relinquish captives without ransom, and pay an annual fee for the damages done.⁶ The treaty was bathed in English supremacy, as the Wampanoag defeat had instilled them with a sense of superiority. It would be another two years of suffering before they would come to realize their mistake. Well into 1677, the various tribes of the Dawnland continued their attacks on towns, outposts, and garrisons along the northern border of the colony. Colonists in York petitioned the Massachusetts government for help in May of 1677 due to the “daly Molestations & Massacers” that they were experiencing at the hands of the Indigenous groups.⁷

Petitions and letters to the Massachusetts Bay government from colonists fill the records, asking for assistance, bemoaning their plight, and outlining the overall misery that they were experiencing at the hands of the Wabanaki. The above petition from York goes on to lament that “Necessity will inforce us to desert all . . . whilst wee haue something left,” since the tribes did not seem to be letting up on their offensives, which the colonists were “not in any capacity to pvent.”⁸ Indeed, all along the northern frontier, Massachusetts settlements were being raided and burned, forcing colonists to flee back into the interior of Massachusetts. A motion to the General Court in 1677 notes that

⁶ Pulsipher, “Dark Cloud Rising from the East,” 593.

⁷ “Petition. 27 May 1677,” in James Phinney Baxter ed., *Documentary History of the State of Maine, containing the Baxter Manuscripts*, (DHSM), Vol. 6, (Portland, ME: 1900), 169.

⁸ “Petition. 27 May 1677,” DHSM, 6, 170.

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“verry maine of the Inhabitant of the Countie of Yorkshire and of the coutie of Dover and Portsmouth. . .haue left their Habitations & garrisons and are gone into other parts of the country,” and that they should be ordered to “returne and those that remaine may be commanded not to depart without license from authoritie vppon their perrill,”⁹ but to no avail. The Wabanaki attacks would continue, with more accounts of Indigenous attackers burning houses, killing cattle, and terrorizing colonists from places like York, Black Point, and Scarsborough continuing throughout the summer.

During that summer, Moxes, an Abenaki Sagamore, sent a letter to the government in Boston about a mutual exchange of captives. However, it was clear a deal would only be made on his terms. He first dictates that their response had to come through “Mr. garner” or “Mr. Oliver” since they did not trust anyone else from Massachusetts. Next, he tells them to send “powder cloth tobacco liker corn bread” as well as “the captives you took to Pemaquid.” He makes it clear in his letter that they were in control, adding that they “can fight as well as others,” but they were “willing to live peasabel” if the English colonists were willing to comply. In his lengthy postscript, Moxes lays bare his thoughts on the English, a call that would be profoundly prescient for the future. He states that “Now we hear that you say you will not leave war as long as on engeon is in the country we are owners of the country & it is wide and full of engeons & we can drive you out.”¹⁰ Even then the Wabanaki could clearly see the fight ahead of them, and they were certain of their role in it.

The conflict finally ended in 1678, with the English signing a peace treaty between themselves and the various Sagamores of the Dawnland on April 12. Not even two years after the English had tried to strong arm Mogg Heigon in Boston, their

⁹ “Motion to the Honrd Generall Court June 6, 1677,” DHSM, 6, 170.

¹⁰ “Moxes & Indians W. H. & G. read by Mrs. Hamond, 1 July 1677,” DHSM, 6, 177-178.

representatives were gathering at Pemaquid to try and broker a peace with the Wabanaki. The main points of the treaty included forgiveness for “all acts, of hostility & of all former Injuries” as well as prisoner exchange. The final provision denoted reciprocal justice should either side transgress against the other. This was a unique feature of an English-Indigenous treaty that was unheard of to that point. As far back as 1621, judicial authority had always favored the English. But here, the Wabanaki had proven that they were not subservient to the English colonists.¹¹ Indeed, the treaty would go even farther: the Wabanaki invited the English colonists to return to their settlements in their territory, on the condition that they would pay one peck of corn annually per family as an acknowledgment of Indigenous authority in the region.¹² The Wabanaki would still want to benefit from an English presence in the region, both for access to their material wealth, as they had before King Philip’s War, and as a way to extract more gifts from the French. Even during the treaty signing, Joshua Scottow noted that the returned prisoners had all described the lavish gifts that the French had bestowed upon Madockawando, including “2 barrels of flower, one barrell of wine, one barrell of Tobacco, & about 12 yards of Trucking Cloth.”¹³ That the captives were made aware of these dealings and felt the need to share shows both English anxieties about the Wabanaki relationship with the French, and Madockawando’s apparent awareness of this fact.

The power the Wabanaki were able to show in King Philip’s War solidified their position as the dominant group in the region. They had decimated the English colonies and forced a favorable treaty, allowing the English to come back only because they

¹¹ Joshua Scottow, Narrative of voyage to Pemaquid, 1677, *Collections of the Maine Historical Society* (Coll 420 V. 8 F.57).

¹² Jeremy Belknap, *The History of New-Hampshire. Comprehending the Events of One Complete Century from the Discovery of the River Pascataqua*, v.1, (Philadelphia, 1784), 129.

¹³ Scottow, Narrative of Voyage to Pemaquid, 1677.

benefited from their presence and the material wealth they garnered. This was the situation as it stood by the 1680s; the Wabanaki were dictating the resettlement of the area and benefiting from proximity to English goods, but not allowing the colonists complete access, notably withholding fishing rights from them. However, the peace they had pronounced would not last, and soon after the English threat would return. In the interim, the people of the Dawnland would continue to court the French, using their proximity to the English as a constant means of acquiring support from Quebec.

The tribes of the Dawnland had been exploring relationships with the French to the north and west for decades. Not content to simply rely on the English and the occasional Dutch venture for material goods, the Abenaki had spent the latter half of the seventeenth century traveling to Quebec, attempting to establish a working relationship with the French colonists there. By 1676, they had established a relationship with the Jesuits in Sillery, just outside of the city. The French saw in the Abenaki not only potential converts to Catholicism, but potential allies against the Haudenosaunee, whom they had been embroiled in several wars with in preceding decades, colloquially referred to as the Beaver Wars. As such, they not only welcomed the Abenaki who were arriving at Sillery but began sending lavish gifts back to the Dawnland to try and entice more to follow.¹⁴ Through these gifts they hoped the Abenaki would relocate and give up their dealings with the English. Indeed, in 1676, one of the Jesuits noted that a large number of Abenaki had come from New England, and that they “appeared before Monsieur our governor, who received them on condition that they would not return.”¹⁵ But the Abenaki would not remain, and instead continued to travel back and forth, extracting gifts and bribes from the French at Sillery and then returning to their kin in the

¹⁴ Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 105.

¹⁵ Letter from Father Jean Enjalron to _____, Sillery, October 13, 1676, in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit relations and allied documents: travels and explorations of the Jesuit missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, 60, 133.

Dawnland with the newly acquired material wealth.¹⁶ As pressure between the English and the Wabanaki mounted, the Indigenous groups used this established relationship with the French to obtain weapons and ammunition, once again carrying it back to their homes to the east, despite promises to quit such movement and permanently move to the area. As they brought these guns into New England, the Wabanaki also made sure they let the English colonists know where they were getting their supplies, promising more support was available, and stoking English fears of their European rivals.¹⁷

Despite the damage wrought by the Wabanaki during King Philip's War, and the high price that colonists on the borders paid, the English did not learn their lesson. The treaty of 1678 established a social order that was dictated by the Wabanaki. They had decided that the English could return, albeit in a limited fashion, so that they could benefit from their presence. But they would not let the English go unchecked: the extraction of a tribute, the refusal of fishing rights, and the recency of violence would all serve as a reminder that the colonists were not in charge. Still, it was not long before the English colonists resumed their encroaching ways. By the 1680s, the colonists ceased to pay their annual tribute to the Wabanaki. They had also resumed invasive animal husbandry practices, with cattle destroying Indigenous fields and disturbing their lands, just as they had in the previous decades. The English colonists also constructed fishing seines in the rivers, obstructing the Indigenous fishing habits and extracting large amounts of alewives, salmon, and sturgeon from the river and the coasts.¹⁸ This all was coupled by the aggressive construction of military garrisons and forts along the Atlantic coast and throughout the region. To the Wabanaki, these countless violations of their treaty showed the English colonists had not learned their lessons in 1678, and they soon

¹⁶ Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 105.

¹⁷ "Affidavit of John Hornibroke, February 22, 1683-1684", MHS, 5: 62-63, quoted in Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 106.

¹⁸ Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 108 & Belknap, *History of New Hampshire*, 196.

resumed the coercive techniques that the English colonists on the borders would have remembered from the previous decade. They began visiting homes and towns in small parties, threatening or enacting violence, and promising the colonists that more was to come. In a letter to the Boston magistrates, Edward Tyne wrote that “Saco Indians ffour or fiue times ffired up on some Cattle which got in to there Corne and wounded some vth small shot and that they gauve uerey threatning words to the English of Shooting them.”¹⁹ Panicked, in 1684 the colonial authorities tried to deescalate the situation by reaffirming the 1678 treaty of Casco Bay, but this would only prove to slow the Wabanaki campaign, as English encroachment and violations continued.

By 1688, tensions had reached a boiling point. Throughout the Dawnland, the Wabanaki began coalescing at Penobscot under Madockawando, a move that caused great anxiety amongst the English colonists. Then, a series of events provided the perfect storm for war. In April of 1688, Governor Edmund Andros sailed north to the outpost of Baron St. Castine, a Frenchman well connected in the area and the son-in-law of Madockawando.²⁰ In addition, Maine resident Benjamin Blackman, fearing Indigenous attacks he had heard about in Western Massachusetts, had kidnapped twenty members of the Saco tribe, sending them to Boston to be imprisoned.²¹ Furious at such attacks, the Wabanaki were ready for war, and two more Atlantic developments would provide the perfect opportunity for exploitation. Later that summer, the citizens of Boston, spurred on by the Glorious Revolution and the overthrowing of James II by William & Mary, would oust Andros and his government. The Revolution would also lead to the Nine Years War in Europe between the League of Augsburg, comprised of England, the Dutch, and the Holy Roman Empire, and the French. Sensing an

¹⁹ “Letter from Edward Tyng, August 18, 1688,” DHSM, 6, 419.

²⁰ Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 116.

²¹ Jenny Hale Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*, 254 & “Letter from Edward Tyng, Casco Bay, September 1, 1688,” DHSM, 6, 421.

opportunity to strike at a distracted and stratified England, as well as taking advantage of a predisposed ally in the French, the Wabanaki commenced their war on the British colonies.

Descriptions of the war mirror those from the previous decade as well, with Wabanaki regiments systematically decimating towns all along the borderlands, taking captives in retaliation for Blackman's transgression, and laying waste to homes and livestock. A report from Saco in July of 1689 relays that the Wabanaki had "killed yesterday .8. or .9. men att Saco who were looking for horses to goe to y^o Army after y^o Indians but now are disapointed & Cutt of, & they judge there w^o 60. or 70. Indians y fought y^o English, & they have burnt several houses, & destroyed a deal of their corne," and implored that the government send military aid.²² Reports from Kennebec in 1688 note that the Wabanaki had taken eleven colonists captive, and another four from Cronwell. An attack on Dover the same year outlines a similar pattern, with Wabanaki killing colonists, burning their houses, and destroying their provisions.²³ Indeed, accounts from the French confirm these practices, as Joseph Robineau de Villebon, the Commandant at Acadia, notes in a 1696 report stating that four groups of Indigenous warriors "had, in the month of July, killed fifteen or sixteen English, burning one alive because a chief had been killed during the action."²⁴ Aided by French weapons and occasional manpower, the Wabanaki staged ever larger and more damaging attacks on English towns and garrisons. In 1691 a company of Wabanaki and French soldiers "made an asault upon ye garrisons in and neere the Towne of Wells," and "killed about

²² "July 23 1689 Att eight of y^o clock att night," DHSM, 9, 18.

²³ "Letter from Wm Stoughton," Sept. 8, 1688, 6, 424 & Belknap, *The History of New-Hampshire*, 204

²⁴ John Clarence Webster & Joseph Robineau, Sieur de Villebon, *Acadia at the end of the seventeenth century; letters, journals and memoirs of Joseph Robineau de Villebon, commandant in Acadia, 1690-1700, and other contemporary documents*, (Saint John 1934), 107.

six persons thereabout."²⁵ The violence would only escalate, bringing war to the colonists of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts once again.

In response to such violence, just as they had a decade earlier, colonists began fleeing, gathering inside the garrisons that had been constructed along the coast, and watching helplessly as their homes were destroyed in front of them. Petitions from across the frontier flooded Boston, as colonists mourned their hopeless situation. Those sent from Kennebec and Sagadahoc call for assistance, as most of their houses were "att This Instant in fflame The Insians being now a burning of them, and killing our Cattle," and "hauing betaken our selues to Saccadehock Garrison for Saue guard of our liues know not what course to take Nott daring to goe from said Garrison."²⁶ Petitions from "Newtowne on Rousack Iland" make a similar call for aid from the government, since they were stuck "in Garison and Left destitute of any helpe the vper garrisons being Lost and destroyed and having no help at present but god."²⁷ Indigenous bands kept these assaults up, attacking the Sagadahoc garrison in the summer of 1689. In his account, commander Elisha Andrews notes that a party of Wabanaki attacked the garrison and "firing upon our men and Pursueing them with 8 canues thay killed six men three of the Inhabitants," as well as three of the soldiers stationed there.²⁸ This Wabanaki campaign, taking advantage of the English settlement patterns in Maine and playing on English fears, allowed them to inflict a serious amount of damage, both physically and psychologically. They inspired such fear that colonists once again attempted to leave the area entirely. Elisha Andrews notes in the same message that all

²⁵ "Extract from a letter of John Easton of Rhode Island to Col Henry Slughter Governor of New York; Dated June 24, 1691," in Franklin B. Hough, ed., "Papers Relating to Pemaquid" ("Pemaquid Papers") *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, 5 (1857), 133.

²⁶ "Petition: The Humble Petition of the Inhabitants of Kennybeck Riuer: and Suchudehock Izland unto the Honourable Councill," DHSM, 6, 481.

²⁷ "Petition from Newtowne on Rousack Iland, June 10, 1689 to Governor and Counsell Assembled at Boston," DHSM, 6, 490.

²⁸ "Letter from Elisha Andrews, Sackadehock Garrison, July 20, 1689," DHSM, 9, 16.

the planters in town were trying to return to towns far away from the borderlands, and that he was trying to make them stay but failing. And this was not just a problem for Sagadahoc. Dunstable had lost nearly two-thirds of its population by 1696, and ten families in Chelmsford had left the region entirely. This became so bad that the Massachusetts government attempted to pass a law preventing emigration in 1694, which would have prohibited people from leaving their communities unless they had an approved reason, risking the seizure of all their property. However, the act was never passed, as it was far too difficult to enforce, and did little to prevent people from fleeing the Wabanaki assaults.²⁹ It is clear from these accounts that the Wabanaki campaign was working. Colonists had forgotten who held power in the region and had begun infringing upon Native territory once again. Through these campaigns of fear, the Wabanaki had succeeded in reminding them, destroying towns and garrisons that threatened their authority, and driving colonists back beyond the borders of the Dawnland. As the war continued, the English would launch campaigns of their own north from Boston, and the battles would become more formalized engagements, but they were never able to strike the decisive blows they hoped for. The war was mostly characterized by smaller engagements punctuated by larger attacks on English forts, especially the fort located at Pemaquid. One such attack, the ultimate victory over the fort at Pemaquid, saw a joint force of six hundred Wabanaki and at least one hundred Frenchmen, outfitted with French weaponry and ships, finally decimate the settlement there, which had been relentlessly harassed since the outset of the war.³⁰

However, by 1693, the Wabanaki had grown weary of fighting. Supplies and morale were waning, and so Madockawando and several other Sagamores attempted to

²⁹ Steven F. Johnson, *Ninnuock: The Algonkian People of New England*, (Marlborough, MA, 1995), 209.

³⁰ Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 122.

establish peace with the English. This was not a unanimous decision by the Dawnland tribes, and some Sagamores protested the whole ordeal. Nevertheless, negotiations began between the group of leaders and William Phips, the New Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It seems the Penobscot endeavored to make peace with the English to solidify access to material goods and wealth. However, the English took this as a sign of victory, and when negotiations began, they crafted a treaty that resembled most of those they had previously made in southern New England. As a result, the treaty reads as a lopsided recognition of English authority by the Wabanaki. It begins with an acknowledgement that the war had “been made & carried on by the Indians” of the region under the “instigation and influence of the French,” thereby freeing the English of all culpability.³¹ It goes on to promise that all the Indigenous groups within the domain of the English would lay down their arms and cease all violence against the English. Far from the treaty of mutual acknowledgment of authority and power that characterized the 1678 treaty, the English in 1693 tried to show that they were in charge. The treaty states that the signees would “abandon & forsake the French” and would not join them in attacking the English ever again. They would also not “conceal any of the enemy Indians of Canada or other places that shall happen to come to any of our Plantations within the English territories, but secure them if in our power & deliver them up to the English.”³² In addition, all English captives were to be returned “without any ransome or payment,” with no mention of Indigenous prisoners being held by the English. The English were also entitled to “enter and forever enjoy all & singular their rights of Land and former titles and possessions” within the region regardless of Indigenous claims. The final point is perhaps the most drastic change: the signees would have to agree that “any

³¹ “11 Aug. 1693 by Great Britain. Agreement with the Eastern Native Americans,” William Pepperrell Papers, *Massachusetts Historical Society*, Ms. N-690, 1.

³² “Agreement with the Eastern Native Americans,” 1.

controversy or Difference at any time here after happen to arise betwixt any of the English or Indians for any real or Supposed wrong or injury done on the one side or the other no private Revenge shall be taken by the Indians for the Paine but proper application be made to their Majesty's Government upon the place for remedy, thereof in a due course of justice." It closes declaring plainly what the previous stipulations had already made obvious: the Wabanaki would "submit [themselves] to be Rule & Governed by their Majesty's Laws."³³ In this way, the treaty hoped to extend colonial jurisdiction over the Wabanaki: no longer would they simply be equal subjects under the King, they would also have to submit to colonial judicial rule. Treaties like the one made between the Wampanoag and Plymouth colonist in 1621 contained similar clauses that created a lopsided judicial system, but the 1678 treaty between the Wabanaki and English clearly had reciprocal jurisdiction on mutual injury. The colonists assumed that, through this treaty, they could finally bring the north under their domain. They were sadly mistaken; although the peace was signed, it was never enacted, and the Wabanaki continued their war against the imperial encroachment, ensuring the English colonists would suffer for their hubris.

Some scholars see these negotiations of 1693 as an attempt to further stoke competition between the English and their French enemies, thereby galvanizing the French into providing all the material benefits they seem to have promised the Wabanaki. During the war, the Wabanaki continued their strategy of extracting material wealth and benefits from the French. The French, understanding their tentative position on the continent and realizing that allying with Wabanaki power offered them the best chance of maintaining their meager foothold there, decided the best option was to shower the Native groups with gifts. Gift giving in this way was already a common

³³ "Agreement with the Eastern Native Americans," 1.

feature of Indigenous diplomacy during the war, showing their incorporation of the French into existing Indigenous systems. A captive taken in 1688 noted that the Sagamores keeping him “sent psents of Wampum Gunns Christians Cloaths and one John Ryall a Captiue to the Penobscott Indians, & other Indians both Eastward and Northward,” and that they soon “returned with about 60 or Seventy Indians more with powder or Lead and Gunns.”³⁴ By mirroring such strategies of alliance-making, the French hoped to garner the support of the Wabanaki. Commandant Villebon, in his accounts of his time in Acadia during the 1690s, understood how important it was to keep the Wabanaki happy, and he made sure to meet regularly with the various groups and outfit them with gift to maintain their alliance. He notes as early as 1691 that the Kennebec had traveled to Fort St. Joseph, and he had furnished them with gifts and a feast.³⁵ Indeed, this interaction is repeated regularly throughout his account of the war, Villebon’s writings littered with descriptions of gift-giving, with particular gifts from the King given when the French were proposing joint campaigns against the English.³⁶ In his last journal sent to Count Pontchartrain in October of 1699, he notes that “the 450 livres worth of presents for the Indians were this year well chosen,” and that, on the Count’s order, he would “give the Micmac Nation the presents which they did not received last year.”³⁷ And the Wabanaki, understanding this system, would make them honor such promises, in one instance saying they would join the campaign “as soon as they had received their presents, which they needed in order to make war.”³⁸ However, by 1693, supplies had dwindled, and the Wabanaki once again began courting the English. This

³⁴ “Examination of Henry Smith, Chyrurgion, taken October 31, 1688,” DHSM, 6, 446.

³⁵ Webster, *Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century*, 36

³⁶ *Ibid*, 59

³⁷ Webster, *Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century*, 124

³⁸ Webster, *Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century*, 59.

caused King Louis XIV to hastily send a ship, the *Bretonne*, laden with gifts and supplies for their allies, to prevent any negotiations that would leave them vulnerable.³⁹

The Wabanaki were aware of the turmoil occurring in Europe, and they took the opportunity to further play the two imperial rivals against one another, exasperating the fears and tensions of the continental conflict for their own gain. Importantly, perceptions of Indigenous power and fear of French utilization of such power caused an existential panic among English colonists, a panic that shaped British choices in this war, and one that exposes just how important they believed Indigenous support was. Returning to John Nelson's letter reveals English attitudes toward the Wabanaki and their relationship with the French. Most of the piece outlines Nelson's theory for why the French have been more successful in courting Indigenous allies, which he sees as the principal reason for their success in the current war. Among these strategies include the giving of "seasonal presents" to Indigenous groups, "chusing some of the more notable amongst them to whom is given a constant pay as a Lieutenant of Ensign," as well as payment for English scalps.⁴⁰ Nelson's account, littered with self-promotion and a misunderstanding of the English place in North America, still reveals British recognition of Indigenous power on the continent. The French, with their limited colonial venture and shallow settlement patterns, were able to provide Indigenous groups with enough material benefits to justify their position there. And because of this relationship, the Wabanaki and their allies were wreaking havoc on the entire British imperial project.

Nelson then issues a fearful warning for the potential future should the British continue to alienate Indigenous groups in North America, noting that if they did not change their position, the French would be able to attack them "on the back side of all

³⁹ Lennox, *Homelands and Empires*, 20 & Kenneth M. Morrison, *The Embattled Northeast: The Elusive Ideal of Alliance in Abenaki-Euroamerican Relations*, (Berkeley, 1984), 127-129.

⁴⁰ John Nelson, "Letter to Charles Talbot, 1695," Massachusetts Historical Society, 196.

our colonies from New England to Carolina,” and that this “disturbance & desolations of [our] southern colonies” would result in “the loss of that great revenue unto the Crown which is drawn from the produce of those countries.”⁴¹ The power that the Indigenous groups held here, although filtered through Nelson’s Eurocentric understanding of the French’s influence, shows how feeble the British hold in North America was at this time, a fact that the Wabanaki were exposing. Not only were Indigenous groups revealing limitations in imperial holdings and heightening imperial competition, but they were also actively exploiting these tensions during the war. As mentioned at the beginning of this piece, Nelson’s plans for a diplomatic end to the conflict in North America was thwarted by a group of Sagamores from Canada that were visiting France at the time. The group, comprised of “six saiganoes, or chiefs, sent from Canada, Hudsons Bay, and nova Scotia,” were apparently in France on a diplomatic visit, which Nelson believed was arranged to show them the power and splendor of France. In making the journey across the ocean, these Sagamores seem to be allowing themselves to be courted in this way. They were also solidifying their political relationship with the French King, asserting that they were foreign diplomats, subjects to the King but equal to his representatives across the ocean in North America, and they would command the respect this brought.⁴² The group of Sagamores, learning of Nelson’s imprisonment and his plans for peace, protested, and convinced the Canada Company to petition for Nelson to remain in prison. Playing on fears of the English and their own position of authority, the six Indigenous leaders found it all too easy to manipulate the interests of the Canada Company and the French government itself to ensure that peace would come on their terms. Such political acumen and understanding of European imperial dogma show the

⁴¹ Nelson, “Letter to Charles Talbot, 1695,” 198.

⁴² Bahar, *Storm of the Seas*, 113, & Pulsipher, *Subjects unto the Same King*.

Wabanaki were able to control their own destiny and their land through more than just violence.

The Nine Years War officially ended in 1697, and with the treaty of Ryswick, the conflict that had embroiled much of the Western European powers came to a tentative conclusion. However, despite this ceremonious end by the imperial powers that be, the war in North America continued. Nevertheless, it is important to dwell on the treaty, what it said, and most importantly, what it did not say. The treaty contains the standard calls to end hostilities along with the mutual return of territories taken during the conflict. However, aside from establishing a commission to decide in the future how to split Hudon's Bay, the North American territories are surprisingly absent from the treaty. France and England exchanged no territorial claims in the area, no fishing or trading rights either.⁴³ Far from the vast imperial claims that characterized European overseas empires, the Wabanaki had demonstrated through force that the imperial fiction of control in the region was far from reality. This was a significant deviation from the other treaties that the British and French signed during their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conflicts. Four years later Britain and France would become embroiled in another conflict known as the War of Spanish Succession, or in North America, Queen Anne's War, and the Treaty of Utrecht that decided the peace in 1713 saw France ceding a large amount of territory to Britain, including the Island of St. Christopher, Nova Scotia, and the city of Port Royal. In addition, the British also barred the French from all "fishing in the said seas, bays, and other places, on the coasts of Nova Scotia."⁴⁴ These treaty stipulations show a clear return to form and an increasing imperial presence in

⁴³ Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 134 & George Chalmers, "A Collection of Treaties between Great Britain and Other Powers" (London, 1790), I., 332-340, in "Extracts from the Peace of Ryswick, Between William III. of England and Louis XIV. of France., September 10/20, 1697," DHSM, 8, 29-32.

⁴⁴ George Chalmers, "A Collection of Treaties between Great Britain and Other Powers" (London, 1790), 340-390 in "Extracts from the Peace of Utrecht, Between Queen Anne of England and Louis XIV. of France., March 31-April 11, 1713," DHSM, 8, 34.

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North America. However, in 1697, France and England were not in a position to dictate such terms as they were in 1713. The Wabanaki still held claim to the Dawnland, and even treaties signed thousands of miles away recognized that.

The Wabanaki themselves would finally settle the conflict nearly two years later. In 1699, with Maine fully decimated, the English population run out, and many of the towns sacked and burned, the peace agreement that was reached proved to be fairly one-sided. It re-established English subservience to Wabanaki power, with two of the Sagamores telling the commander of the Saco fort that “the English shall not repossess the lands in Maine except by agreement with them.”⁴⁵ The anticlimactic nature of the end hides the gravity of the situation. The Wabanaki had, for the second time in two decades, beaten back English encroachment on their land. European expansion is often taken as inevitable, that Indigenous groups toil but succumb to colonial growth. The nations in southern New England had been severely diminished by wars, and the English presence on the continent was only growing. And yet, in spite of this, the Wabanaki Confederacy had pushed back the clock again to 1678: through violence and diplomatic manipulation they had driven colonists out of their land and established the basis for which the English may return. Only at their behest could they return to the Dawnland. Wabanaki power had once again won the day, and the Confederacy had proven that they remained the dominant power in the region.

However, their victory, like that of 1678, did not mean they wanted the English gone forever. The Wabanaki could still benefit from the material wealth of Europeans, and the peace provided the perfect opportunity to continue their exploitation of imperial competition. As France and Britain settled their differences in 1697, Villebon courted the

⁴⁵ “Minutes of Council of New Hampshire,” August 5, 1699, in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies*, ed. Sainsbury, et al. (London, 1860-1969), 385 quoted in Bahar, *Storm of the Sea*, 135.

idea of decreasing the gifts to Wabanaki allies in the Dawnland.⁴⁶ As such, soon after peace was settled between the Wabanaki and New England, the Natives sent a delegation of Sagamores to Boston to invite the colonists to come back and settle in the territory, although with stipulations. These included the construction of a truck house at Casco Bay to be stocked with quality discounted English goods for purchase and staffed by a gunsmith. In return, however, the Wabanaki would extend coastal fishing rights to the English.⁴⁷ This invitation worried the French, who changed their strategy and began shipping even more gifts directly to Indigenous communities in the northeast. However, the Wabanaki continued to play on this imperial rivalry, stoking French religious fears as well by inviting Protestant ministers into their communities for the first time, much to the horror of the Jesuit missionaries who had long called the area home.⁴⁸ At the turn of the century, the Wabanaki were once again straddling two imperial pipelines of goods. By courting both imperial rivals, and playing up their religious and economic fears, the Wabanaki were able to receive the material benefits of both groups while remaining independent of either's control.

Nearly three years after the conclusion of King William's War, conflict once again broke out between empires and their colonial forces. The peace the Wabanaki had brought to the Dawnland was once again threatened as they were pulled into another war between Britain and France. The next six decades would be characterized by almost constant warfare between these two European powers, with a variety of Indigenous allies fighting on either side. European presence on the continent would continue to increase, and Indigenous control in the northeast would dwindle. However, the Wabanaki, despite European infringement on their territory, maintained their regional

⁴⁶ Webster, *Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century*, 19

⁴⁷ Bahaer, *Storm of the Sea*, 135-136.

⁴⁸ Bahaer, *Storm of the Sea*, 137.

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dominance to the end of the century. King William's War presents a special case of Indigenous power in New England. Following King Philip's War, the Wabanaki Confederacy were able to not only beat back English colonial encroachment, but to assert their own authority over the region, dictating English settlement patterns and ensuring they would profit from European goods. By waging violent campaigns against the English colonies, the Wabanaki forced the British out of their territory. In addition, they were able to exploit imperial competition in the region for their own gain, taking advantage of European conflicts and rivalries to extract material benefits from both the English and the French. In doing so, the Wabanaki showed that European claims to the region were simply imperial fictions, that these colonists held no control over the land, and that Indigenous power still maintained sovereignty. Indigenous military prowess in New England did not end with the execution of Pometacom. Dawnland power, derived from the sea and the land alike, remained, and the Wabanaki would spend the last decades of the seventeenth century ensuring that European nations did not forget it.

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