

Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah

Tribal Statement about Turners Falls Massacre Site and King Philips War

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My first memory of Turners Falls was about ten years ago, the winter of 2005. There was snow on the ground that morning as we drove to Vermont to interview Martin Prechtel. We had read and liked his analysis of the colonizers pathos in his book about his Mayan family: *Long Life, Honey in the Heart*. Martin liked my brother's Indigenous perspective on a Thanksgiving radio broadcast and readily agreed to meet. Our project was a short independent documentary film project about King Philips War that was really focused on the cultural and spiritual costs of seventeenth century warfare to the Wampanoag Nation, rather than following the mechanics of the 1675-76 war. I had a chest cold, and didn't realize we were going to go right by the massacre sight, when I started to feel truly sick, and gripped by a dreadful panic. I could not clearly communicate the misery I was both sensing and experiencing. It abated only after spreading tobacco out the window; a prayer on the run. My colleagues pointed out our proximity to the Great Falls.

The conflict known as King Philips' War was named after Wampanoag Sachem Pometacomut, also named Metacomet and King Philip. The war officially lasted for just over one year in southern New England, from June 1675 to August 1676. Tension and English paranoia had existed from day one in the incredibly short existence of Plymouth Colony, begun little more than fifty years earlier. There were conflicts between individuals as well as between the fledgling English Colonial Governments and our Tribal Nations' governments. However, from a Native perspective, war was not an inevitable consequence of English arrival, because human beings always have a choice to cultivate themselves, and to heal from past trauma. Our own ability to adapt was a central element in our traditions. A carefully cultivated sense of respect, and our strong reliance on protocol and consensus had eliminated the need for violence throughout most of our history.

The year was 1671, a year when the as-yet unassailable Wampanoag Tribal Nation had serious cause for concern about preserving their rights in their ancient homeland. The Separatist English had arrived in Massachusetts just 50 years ago, followed about ten years later by the well-connected English Puritans; thousands would follow during the Great Migration. A level-headed and principled head of tribal government at Pokanoket, Metacomet represented the priorities and interests of his people. In his

dealings with Massachusetts Bay Colony and Plymouth Colony, he and other Sachems were clear on this fact time and again as they signed and renewed treaties with the English colonial government, essentially they were confirming the alliance with the English King Charles. Metacomet had important reasons for his initial refusal to attend a 1671 conference when both English colonies and the small group of praying Indians at Natick under John Elliot, insisted the Wampanoag leaders had to come to Plymouth. Years before, the young Wampanoag Sachem Wamsutta had been pulled out of ceremony at Monponset Island, unarmed, and marched to Plymouth. He died suddenly when he was finally released after three days of interrogation by the English government followed by a meal with Governor Winslow. Certain English colonists were known for their interest in alchemy; in fact, a letter reprinted in New England Ancestors Genealogical magazine from Winslow (in Massachusetts) to his son in Connecticut showed him as both afraid for- and afraid of- his own son. Wamsuttas wife, Sunksqua Weetamoo of the Pocasset Wampanoag in Tiverton survived the sachem; the couple may have had children, but as it was common amongst Wampanoag nobility to send children to other communities and tribes in order develop strong translation skills, and to gain an understanding firsthand of other tribal protocols, and forge close diplomatic ties with other Nations, their whereabouts following the war is unknown.

When his brother Metacomet and his wife Wootanakunuske inherited the sachemship in 1662/63 there were several days of ceremony and celebration at Montaup. In Massachusetts Bay Colony, Church official Increase Mather expressed his disapproval of the celebration, as though it were his business. Metacomet was consistently firm and fair in his communications with the Colonies. For their part, the United English Colonies would conspire to erode his Nations Creator-given Sovereignty and cause his death just 14 years later.

“Philips quarrel was with Plymouth,” was an oft-repeated phrase uttered by contemporary Native tribal leaders, and residents of Massachusetts Bay Colony providing a sense of the original scope of the war, while being both misleading and an understatement. One reason for the continued harassment of the large autonomous Wampanoag population in southeastern Massachusetts was that converting Natives was proving a very profitable business. Winslow would travel to England and get a bill supporting the Indian Mission passed in Parliament. His door to door campaign in England and Wales raised 12,000 lbs English money over the course of one year. Throughout time small portions of funds were used for Native meetinghouses, preachers, schools and schoolteachers, some of them Native. But the vast majority was pocketed by the Colonial government. The missionizing of Natives was a profitable business. Massachusetts Bay Colony officials and Reverend John Elliot had double-crossed Metacomet

and other Wampanoag Sachems. Whilst they were initially concerned and appearing sympathetic to the official complaints lodged by the Wampanoag leader on behalf of his subjects, when Philip and his councilors did go to confirm the treaty, he was admonished as though a child for bad behavior. The newly condescending tone towards the sachem was a marked change from the original behaviors in treaty conferences between the English and Wampanoag, just one generation ago. The English Colonial Governors were trying to play paternal to Indigenous leaders whose status was beyond theirs; it was morally wrong and politically foolish. It was a mistake that would cost the Colonial Governors and their subjects dearly, and take years to recover from. During the negotiations English authorities would make an anthill out of a mole-hole. Condemning Philip for behaving badly in insisting English messenger John Brown take off his hat when addressing tribal leadership at Montaup. Next they tackled the problem of Indians capable of self-defense by seizing their guns. Finally the court fined Pokanoket 100 lbs English money for Philips terrible breach with the hat, perhaps damage to English fences and some missing cows taken by Indians who could not afford to lose a year or more worth of food and seed stock in their corn, bean and squash fields. Under duress, he and several other sachems would then be forced to sign a new treaty that recast the status of Wampanoag "Ancient Proprietors" (as the Separatists had referred to them), not as allies, but subjects of the English King, and subjects *under* the Colonial Plymouth Government and Plymouth colonists.

The accidental death of Praying Indian John Sassamon, a Wampanoag (or Wampanoag and Massachuseak) was cited by contemporary English chroniclers as the "murder" that started the war. I have not seen any evidence that there was truth to the story that John died because he supposedly had gone all the way to Marshfield to warn the colonial governor that the Wampanoag Nation planned war. I do not think he would be in the know, teaching at the small meetinghouse at Nemasket, and dealing mainly with John Eliot and Natick, mainly a Massachuseak and Nipmuc town. It did occur to me however, that Wamsutta died after speaking with Governor Winslow, which is an interesting parallel, if he did go. I'd imagine John just fell through the ice that January. I spent my early years canoeing throughout southeastern Massachusetts, and am well familiar with Assawompsett Lake. I also know through genealogical records that people died-at sea and on lakes, for reasons that included hypothermia and exhaustion after a boat capsized, or from falling through the ice. John Sassamon was no longer a young man. Accidents happen, for example-people miscalculate drops in temperature or push themselves too far when suffering from a cold. When he was finally pulled from the pond, a funeral and burial were held. Sassamon had a family residing near the Lake, in the midst of the community of Assawompsett/Nahteawanet; they would have shared the funereal meal and gone

through a period of mourning. When the Plymouth Colonial government exhumed John Sassamon's body from a tribal burial ground and examined it in Plymouth, that action was reprehensible to Traditional and Christian Indians alike, who believed in respecting the right of the dead to rest in peace. Those actions involved trespass onto lands under Wampanoag jurisdiction.

What would really have concerned the Wampanoag tribes from Potamicut to Pokanoket, was the so-called Treaty of 1671, and English encroachments into our territory. But, in spite of the new terms of the treaty (that only mentioned the English king because Metacomet requested it), Plymouth Colonial Government took several years to work up the courage to push the Nation to the brink of war on this point in June of 1675. The little English colony desired to break up the Nation into a sub-class of Plymouth colony, allowing us to stay on as slaves in our homeland. English Colonial Authorities wrote laws and tried to impose them on Tribes, to the extent that they could get away with it, and the replace them with worse versions. Rhode Island governmental authorities pointed out that Massachusetts Bay Colony did not even bother acknowledging the King on their official correspondence.

Plymouth Colony leaders seized on the assertion, albeit months later, that Sassamon had been killed in January. It was not until June that Patuckson, a Christian Indian, claimed to be an eyewitness to the murder and said it was committed by Tribal nobility: Pokanoket councilor Tobias, his son Wampapaquin, and Mattachunnamo. The three main maintained their innocence, but were found guilty and hanged, except for Wampapaquin, who offered a confession after the rope broke. A young man, I would imagine he was frightened and horrified, and thought to escape death. He was spared for one month and then shot. There were as many as four Native advisors to the jury, but the jury *was not obliged* to listen to them. There are images that come to mind as I ponder this history: one is of the three tribal members walking to the gallows, in an English town that had not existed one hundred years before, but that was full of its own pomp and circumstance, its people getting high on power. Had history been different, they would be walking through the pleasant tribal community of Squanto's people, full of garden plots as in the John Smith map, no doubt on a very different errand.

The war began shortly after, when a young Wampanoag man in a party of three was shot supposedly pilfering by an English boy at his father's suggestion. Indians visited the garrison and inquired why their tribal member had been shot, in John Easton's: *Relation of the War*. It seems as though there may have been a different outcome even at that point had the colonists been able to carry themselves differently. However, plenty of the individuals who left Europe did so because the courts gave the option of that or jail. Later in history Massachusetts would refuse ships of new indentures because there was no telling

with each boatload who might be a hardened criminal. This personality type would be repeatedly employed to open up new areas to white settlement on the frontier.

Soon English colonists in Swansea were dead; supposedly revenge killings. By the end of June, Plymouth colony had suffered repeated attacks, of the kind of guerrilla warfare they had no experience in, and the war was spreading into other colonies. Determined to continue with their aggressive English-style diplomacy, representatives nearly started a series of individual wars with tribes surrounding the Wampanoag, in demanding submission to new agreements and expecting to be allowed to seize hostages for surety. Their racism would hasten the formation of a large Indian Confederacy that quickly mobilized.

The Wampanoag-Plymouth Colony disputes had come to a head with the shooting of a Wampanoag person in the nearly empty newly-English Swansea, lands obtained by forced deeds just north of Metacomb's home in Mount Hope. Philip avoided arbitration with Plymouth due to the horrible results (i.e. loss of Swansea, loss of hunting and fishing rights) of the same process with Massachusetts Bay Colony. But he had liked Rhode Islander John Easton's advice of convening a council discussion, with a neutral sachem and neutral colonial leader-Governor Andros to find solutions. The colonies were not interested however. Instead of containing the conflict, the English set every Native tribe in the region on guard by invoking the United Colonies, joining with Rhode Island and Connecticut, ostensibly against only the Wampanoag. The truth was that surrounding tribes were being antagonized, threatened, and were horrified to learn that Wampanoag women and children were being sold out of the country. Just as tribes harbored Pequot's openly and secretly, after that earlier massacre; they made space for our people, while remaining neutral. Wampanoag leader Massasoit had assisted some of these tribes in negotiations with the Massachusetts Bay Colony, like the Nipmuc. Sunksqua Weetamoo, in addition to being a leader for her Nation, was sought after by tribes outside our borders, a knowledge-keeper wise beyond her years due to the training and responsibilities conferred on her by the tribe and her father venerable Wampanoag Sachem Conbitant. She would soon have no problem making a request for safe passage into Narragansett territory, where her people could over-winter in the fort at the Great Swamp.

Weetamoos' territory of Pocasset and Metacomb's at Montaup had taken in those of the Nation that were avoiding the corruption of English squatters, and Colonial-Christian religious persecution. Like the Vineyard, it had become a place of refuge. Likewise Rochester area sachem Tayosq, and nearby Totoson led populous tribes in the south coast. Tayosq may have survived the war, as a name similar to his -Chiosque- appears on later seventeenth century deeds from in and near his territory. Northwards in

lands abutting Massachuseak territory Tuspaquin and Massasoits' daughter Ami governed the people at Assawompsett Lake. For the next year all of these Wampanoag leaders traveled with large companies, some of them leading offenses close to the seat of Plymouth government, burning the garrison house on the Eel River. One tribal member commented that a Colonist dressed in brown with a gun on his shoulder appeared from time to time, patrolling the vicinity, as if time never caught up with them.

Dreading to enter cedar swamps, especially because they were badly outnumbered, sparse English forces waited for reinforcements before engaging in the wintertime attack with the Wampanoag in the Great Swamp. They fought over frozen ground to the fort in a storm in Narragansett territory. After that our Native communities remained mobile, sought sanctuary in allied Nipmuc country, and points north and west, beyond easy reach of Plymouth. Metacomet went across the Housatonic to spend time with another Algonquian tribe, the Mahican in their territory just outside of Albany, New York. He went with a large company of Wampanoag and stayed for months that winter into 1676. Yet in his absence fighting continued in Massachusetts. The Wampanoag arranged a Conference with Indians from the North, with "straws through their noses," according to a captive they deliberately sent off with accurate counts of the men. There were some 900 or more Abenaki/Algonquian troops, and 400 or more Wampanoag in New York.

The Deputy Governor of New York Anthony Brockholls, arranged to have a party of 200 Mohawk Indians attack the Wampanoag after the groups split up to return to the east. Writers would claim this broke the strength of Philips men and of the Northern Indians, preventing the transportation of ammunition and other supplies down to the southern New England Tribal Confederacy. The numbers are puzzling to this observer: 200 was a very small number of Mohawks compared to the armies they assailed their enemies with in other campaigns. And a small number compared to those whom they were chasing. I can't think why this would make such an impact, unless the Northern tribes faced the threat of larger groups of Mohawks or combined Hudenoshaunee forces in the near future. But it's not clear they could have made good on the threat, as the Mohawks were suffering the same kinds of foreign encroachment, attrition due to European disease, and the higher energetic costs of creating loyal fighting forces of those Nations they had already absorbed through "heavy wooing" -the repeated harsh raids, followed by offers of peace by joining their League, as mentioned in *The Memory of All Ancient Customs*. Many tribes, including I think, the Woronoco's and Pocumtucks, did not accept, understanding the men would be put to work as cannon fodder for the next Iroquois war. These other tribes had already gone through

years of numbing warfare. And they still remembered what true peace was. Pocomtuck in Stockbridge would later opt to travel to Ottawa for a fresh start, rejecting the chance to move into New York.

As mentioned the Wampanoag divided up, heading in different directions under Weetamoo, and Philip. Their allies would claim that the Wampanoag were not fighting. They may have been covering for the tribe that was in now spread between Massachusetts, New York and Vermont; young men who had actively engaged in defensive and offensive operations, would not be liable to convince other tribes to join the fight, whilst suddenly all putting down their own weapons. The Nation's leadership were wanted men and women that had been fighting for some time however, it is entirely likely that they divided their time between strategies for the present, gathering food and medicine for themselves and their Native companies. Worn out gear had to be replaced, ammunition had to be procured from the English towns or via trade in the north. Conducting Intertribal Councils, after sending word to other Northeastern Nations not yet present, took time. Communicating for example with Sokoki at Squakeag would have been fairly simple whilst already out on the Connecticut River; reaching the Pennacooks and Pequaque (Pigwacket) in New Hampshire and Maine, or Mahican in New York required more travel time either for a runner, or by horse or boat.

Saco River Native fighting companies also took part in the war, whilst Wannalancet's band of the Pennacooks and some of the Ossipees and Pequaquakes opted to for a neutral stance, and moved to Sillery on the (a mission town founded in 1638 near old Quebec City) and the mouth of the Connecticut River during King Philips War, they also went to Three Rivers/Becancour and the northwestern tip of Lake Champlain to wait things out. A map of the area described here would be very large-but not comprehensive, a short while later "*Loops*" –the derisive term for southern New England Indians-and Virginia or Maryland tribal people, were seen by the French. They had traveled to Ohio on a trading expedition, included a sachem from Boston who spoke perfect English, and were probably bringing news from home to some of the first waves of displaced Northeastern Natives in the Colonial era.

One of the challenges to seeing how the war was waged is lack of accurate headcounts counts for Wampanoag and other fighting companies, wives, children and elders during the year. Gordon Day draws together records of Wampanoag leaving Massachusetts for Scaticook (west side of the Hudson River) with our old allies in the Mahican tribal territory. The Woronoco originally on the Westfield River were already there when Governor Andros planted his tree of peace, referred to by tribes who lodged there in circa 1676 and later. According to a Native eyewitness, more than 250 fighting men made the journey after the battle on the Housatonic (attack by Connecticut militia), two hundred men crossed the

Hudson below Albany and about 80 other stopped on the east side near a Dutch village...Priests writing about French-allied or -associated Indians said that former Wampanoag, Nipmuc Nashaway and Sokoki military were concealed by the Pennacook and other tribes that had made peace with the English.

Members of our tribe headed north and west with women, children and elders, had been suffering losses at the hands of the colonies for years, and were working through the trauma of being separated from home. After nearly a year in exile-albeit in still-familiar lands –small groups of Wampanoag and Narragansett’s headed back into their territory to retrieve seed corn for planting by the waterfalls by a combined group of elders and women. English captives were ransomed back to Massachusetts Bay Colony at a meeting point on the path that is now Route 140. At a point where hostilities might have ceased permanently that spring while a peace treaty was negotiated for all parties involved, the now-infamous pre-dawn massacre at Turners Falls happened, followed by looting. There is something about the spirit of these deaths reminds me of the shooting in Swansea.

The return of many Wampanoag, Narragansett, Nipmuc, Sokoki and Pennacook among others to their Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island territories is borne out by the many tribal communities, small tribal neighborhoods and praying towns that existed, late seventeenth- and early eighteenth century- in Massachusetts and eastern Rhode Island. Some were right next to each other. Mashpee and 10 Cape Cod Indian towns did not empty out, but would remain neutral or ally with the English. Some of the Sunksqua Awashonk’s Sakonnet’s stopped fighting and submitted to the English. Men from that tribe were housed in Dartmouth with the instructions that they should not be stationed further west in case they were tempted to rejoin Philips people. To me, that indicates Natives were still moving throughout their territory, whilst English holed up in garrison houses. Of course they took risks in doing so. Some of these places were later appointed Colonial overseers, called Guardian of the Indians, generally several to a community. But not all were appointed guardians, nor were they necessarily well represented in the records, in spite of being quite large, such as in Falmouth in Barnstable County.

One of the reasons for this, I think, is that they were less Christianized in character than other area tribes. The various Missionaries operating in Wampanoag homelands post- King Philips War from 1700-onwards were visiting families and communities, as well as preaching to their own indentures and Indian indentures working other English farms. Josiah Cotton traveled throughout Plymouth County to give sermons in the language for decades, in Titicut, Duxbury, at the Jones River and another locale in Kingston, in North Plymouth, Eel River in Plymouth and Manomet Pond, he soon had Native teachers

working for him. According to Douglas L. Winiarski in *A Question of Plain Dealing*, Cotton compiled a more detailed list of other Indian towns and number of attendees at sermons in that county. Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes and Nantucket counties all contained multiple tribes. From my tribes own genealogical records we know many present day Aquinnah have family roots not just at Gay Head, Sanjakantacket, and Takemmy, but also Nantucket and mainland tribal communities such as Pocasset, Titicut, Acushnet, Assawompsett and Mattakeeset in Rochester, Mashpee and Potanamicut. Gathering in the meetinghouses was one of the ways tribal members could network, and get an education; some of them would later be employed as lay preachers, and schoolmasters.

Noepe (Marthas Vineyard) and Nantucket tribal island communities, about 9 altogether, would remain neutral in the war. In spite of having very large Wampanoag populations, they too were veterans after a fashion, the first line of defense for more than perhaps 150 years against pirates, and slavers. Although likely supportive of Philip and the other mainland sachems, being involved could have meant permanently losing everything had the war gone badly. The Wampanoag people used diverse strategies to survive this challenge, just one of many they had dealt with in the past few generations. Some of their choices were painful. Still the sun rose and the tides came and went. From their vantage point on the headlands at Aquinnah they could have observed Benjamin Church's boat stop on Naushon island, being a convenient resting point on the way to deliver Native captives to Sandwich or Plymouth in the colony. Normally routine travel, back and forth to places like Acushnet and Sakonnet or Cape Cod would not have been undertaken too often during the conflict, though it's possible that tribal signals were being shared long distance visually via reflective rocking stones and fire on high points. Tribal members throughout the Nation seemed to share a different kind of intuitive bond forged over thousands of years of relative peace; Mayhew acknowledged that his converts on the island for example, knew things about distant people and events when they were happening. His written comments however, were very brief, as the topic was heretical according to his religious precepts.

Based on the reaction I had as well as the observations of other tribal members who have worked in the vicinity, there were Wampanoag among those slain at the Great Falls in 1676. We may never locate a piece of paper that proves that fact or gives us their names. That does not make them any less human, or their pain less acute. Additionally we were and continue to be connected to tribes throughout the region through intermarriage; one example of this was that on the eve of war, Narragansett leaders sent Wampanoag spouses of tribal members back to their own territory.

For the Wampanoag, our place here in the Northeast Atlantic continues to inform who we are and how we do things, as well as how we express ourselves. My sense of panic and hopelessness at the Turners Falls massacre site is similar to the descriptions in our Algonquian Windigo stories, where a terrible set of circumstances for example-extremely asocial, violent behavior- attracts a dark spirit. The thing about those kinds of spirits is that they endure, for a very, very long time after the event has ended. They lurk around the area of the devastation, seeking ways to prey upon and frighten the unwary who wander in. Such rare locations were generally places everyone Native tacitly agreed to avoid. In the broader cannon of Northeastern and Canadian Windigo stories, it is only the Otter that can overcome such a spirit, by eating its Heart of Ice. Tribal people held to the notion that it is better not to cause something bad, than attempt to take it back later.

But what if genocide was a compulsion, and the slaughter that spring day by the rich waterfalls was waiting to happen? There is a fairly recent mental health study on those suffering from bi-polar disease that cites the percentage with this malady is at the same percentage in each country worldwide, but that when bi-polar individuals emigrate their children exhibit more severe symptoms. Of course studies can be opportunistic, and we are bombarded with anti-immigration propaganda on an almost daily basis, ironically enough, in America. But what if this explains some of the tragic aspects of our seventeenth century history?

In *Keepers of the Earth*, Okanagan journalist Jeanette Armstrong uses literal translations from her west coast Native tongue to orient the reader to a tribal world view. Her grandmother and father paused in picking blackberries. They were looking down from a green hilltop on the reservation into a congested town, complete with factories belching smoke and traffic jams. Her Grandmother commented: the people down there are dangerous. To which her father replied: It's because they are wild and scatter anywhere. They were referring to the need on the part of the dominant society to exploit the land and each other on a constant basis, and how that derives from lacking the ability to acknowledge a deep connection to anything-a lonely existence by Native American standards, to be sure.

One story that stayed with me, recorded in 17th century Boston by William Wood in the 1630's. It illustrates with elegant simplicity, the marked difference in intentions between Massachusetts's Natives and the Europeans who came here. I have rewritten the account, removing the heavy Wampanoag Native accent:

One day, the people were fishing and diving in the salt water, when an island suddenly appeared on the horizon. They all decided to swim out to it and pick strawberries there. But the island turned to a ship and fired cannons at them.

For Algonquian people the word for ripe red strawberry, wutahumuneash literally translates to “Heart berry”. It is an enduring symbol of peace and friendship, the renewal and recognition of old alliances and the forging of new ones. I always come back to this relation of the beginning of the end of our way of life here on Turtle Island.

In contrast with English women, Wampanoag women routinely held prominent positions in Native society, as skilled artisans, eloquent orators, as the witnesses in council that memorized discussion and wove proceedings into wampum belts. Native women were in charge of two interconnected things: land use and distribution by clan, and governing the size of their families. A woman would not bear more children than she could comfortably raise, and to preserve her health the timing of their births was spread out. That more careful approach survived two centuries of English encroachment. A 1792 census of Gay Head Indians mentioned women’s use of birth control, to ensure there was both time enough and resources enough to raise healthy, intelligent children. From the seventeenth century onward, English worked to marginalize Native women, refusing to record most of their names; by speaking only to men in their efforts to make Christian converts; in buying land and deciding how it would be used. In *Subjects Unto the Same King*, J.H. Pulsifer mentions the popular assertion English colonists on large farms could not produce enough food to support their children’s or grandchildren’s needs. Uncontrolled reproduction, and wasteful attitudes towards resources drove an endless desire for expansion out of England and across the North and South American continents. Although tribal people increased food production and learned to keep it from being destroyed by pigs, they were being overrun in place like Boston. Boats of more people would arrive, without the means to support themselves, acknowledging they “got their victuals from Indians.” An endless stream of beggars was exhausting our ability to save seed corn and medicines and was disruptive to normal family life. The strange behavior was observed across the Nations in waves, noted centuries later by an Okanagan family on the opposite coast.

Descriptions of outright abuse of Indigenous women abound: female Pequots, sold into English households, were badly abused, they tried to fight off the gangs, and demanded fair treatment. Some fled into our territory. *Chain Her By One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth Century New France*, is a book title that refers to the foreigners practice of punishing high status Native women to the north by tying them up outside in the elements until their spirits were broken and they converted

or died. This tactic was only possible after plagues had reduced our populations, reducing the networks built and largely maintained by the work of far-seeing tribal women.

In my language, the word for women is *Mutumwuhsis*. It means: the *One who has the Final Say*. Women were bestowed with a different perspective, and empowered every day to put their strengths to work for the people, as the sole life-givers on Mother Earth. Their influence was far-reaching. Accounts of the long lives enjoyed by the Indian population are preserved in early documents, including the Jesuits. Tribal informants spoke of people hunting at the age of 130 years old, and still alive, though suffering from poorer eyesight at 150. One 20th century tribal member was told by their grandmother that they could live to be 200, but would not choose to do so. Things have changed from where tribal elders could confer such gifts on their descendants; the destruction of an easy ability to hand down a very different way of being was the main reason why colonial governments made the break-up of Native families their priority. It also means they could not benefit from exposure to that way of life. Exposure to childhood diseases, including diabetes that are no longer lethal for the most part, still put enough strain on all of our systems to guarantee a shorter life, and poorer quality of life.

One of the things that made the Wampanoag approach to war distinct from Euro-American's, was an unshakable strong reverence for life, and for women as the life-givers. Their work and sacrifices were recognized as central to the health and well-being of our towns, and their foresight prevented problems from blossoming into major crises. In: *A Key Into the Language of the Americas*, Roger Williams followed one of his word lists, with what may be a direct quote from a Sachem or War Captain: What should I hazard the lives of my precious Subjects, them and theirs to kindle a Fire, which no man knows how farre, and how long it will burne, for the barking of a Dog?

The kinds of wars waged by Northeast Indians had been, on the main, diplomatic ones. A disagreement of some kind would be followed by a cooling off period, meetings in council, competitive games, running races, limited fighting with longbows, or hand to hand combat with wooden ball headed war clubs, of short duration. Due to the changing proportion of Native to Non-Natives in coastal waters and on land, Wampanoag people had to see to their defenses. Native palisades were built in areas easily accessible to foreigners such as Aquinnah, Poamet and Montaup, in Kingston above Pawtuxet, Massachuseak territory around Boston, and at sites on the Connecticut River for community use and as defensible centers of trade. Watches were kept. Initially palisades were rounded to oval in form, and built from large upright tree trunks levered into position with ditches and supported by berms that can still be observed on the land today or mentioned in archeological reports. Native canoes had the advantage

when it came to travel in shallow sections of river. The tribes had a practical knowledge of the land and waters: of the rough spots, and good portage places. They also employed wooden rafts and poles to transport people, goods and animals. One Micmac elder shared with me that his tribe designed bows of much higher poundage than for hunting, to shoot arrows tipped with cast iron (recycled trade metal) that could pierce European armor. The same technology was described as an adaptation to the Spanish Conquistador attacks up the Mississippi River. Swords, daggers, knives, and guns, powder and shot were obtained in trade and employed by Native companies, in addition to their own stone, bone or copper knives. Prisoner tie cords and snowshoes were used into the 18th century, in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. A slit pouch over the belt was useful method for carrying food rations and medicines for dressing wounds in the field. The tightly woven sashes, wampum bands and intricately painted and porcupine quill embroidered deerskin articles men wore into battle bore protective colors and marking designed to ward off harm, knowledge that the various Algonquian art guilds/medicine societies preserved and passed on to new members.

As late as the Revolutionary War, the Stockbridge Indian Company from western Massachusetts, carried longbows, tightly woven rush quivers of arrows, guns, woven bast visors, and deerskin moccasin's for silent travel. During King Philip and other wars, Native allies to the English would threaten the lives of Colonist militia for wearing heavy shoes and stomping; they were an enormous liability. Captain Benjamin Church would request supplies for his soldiers including "mogkinsins" for that reason. In 1671 Hugh Cole observed Wampanoag men making bows, arrows and half pikes. Tribal members had the advantage in terms of their familiarity with Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont terrain, their good balance and ability to climb, as 18th century sources marvel at the way Natives walked or ran across the frames of barns in progress, and a Native servant amazed his master by retrieving the right escaped cow quickly, because he knew its' tracks. For their part, the Carver area Wampanoag in these accounts seem puzzled as to why these were considered amazing feats. Our long experience navigating life in a region full of large black bears, wildcats, wolves, weasels, and snakes meant Native parents had to teach their children to have decent observation skills and calm demeanors.

The body discipline practiced by Native militaries was legendary, with Native companies reaching a battle great distance away by running, and then step right into the fight. Calling cadence was practiced by these companies in training under the direction of war captains, to build lung capacity and focus the men's attention. The physical strength of Indians, and speedy reflexes would be noted throughout history, both in New England, and as far away as Apache country. In the book: Once They Moved Like

the Wind, one leader under threat instantly slashed open the back of the military tent with his knife and sprung to the top of a high hill behind it, moving so automatically he still held a cup full of hot coffee at the crest. As a girl I saw my petite, gentle, elderly Native grandmother strike a large vicious dog down with such speed, that she had my full attention, not the animal. Like a martial artist, she had employed a beautiful economy of movement, in only moving her hand and arm, wasting no energy, and remaining completely composed. It was a rare glimpse of power that neither she, nor our Eastern Algonquian ancestors flaunted.

These defenses were managed in addition to everything else. At that time, there was still peace to be had; Wampanoag were not completely jaded from dealing with the more corrupt characters who set up shop. When the strangers arrived on the coast, people were curious, and tribal members walked through their small communities to trade fish and so forth. Our people were generally well-adjusted, and did not spend their time starting trouble. One of the ways harmony was preserved in villages was simply by knowing when to mind one's own business. Self-sufficiency as we practiced it was demonstrated in this description by Roger Williams of a man making his canoe: I have seen a Native goe into the woods with his hatchet, carrying onely a Basket of Corne with him, & stones to strike fire when he had feld his tree (being a chestnut) he made him a little House or shed of the bark of it, he puts fire and followes the burning of it with fire, in the midst of many places: his corne he boyles and hath the Brook by him, and sometimes angles for a little fish; but so hee continues burning and hewing until he hath within ten or twelve days (lying there at his work alone) finished.

It is difficult to discern if the sparse communications penned by English chroniclers and military men were truth, lies or something in between. There is an alarming lack of information in the diaries of many Massachusetts English authority figures, as they went silent about their experiences with the natives in much the same way that Governor Bradford in Plymouth had done, following the Wessagusett affair. William Hubbard and Increase Mather wrote two frequently consulted tomes on King Philip Wars; they were competitors of each other, but it is interesting to note that both consulted Winthrop's journals. Captive Mary Rowlandson was not a historian, nor was she necessarily invested in giving detailed accurate accounts. Her writings did not acknowledge Weetamoo's strong moral character as a leader during the war, so much as complain about the way she dressed and her expectations of Mary.

Stories about the fate of Metacomet's head and hands appear to be fabrications. There was an oft-repeated tale that Alderman the Indian shot King Philip and kept his mummified hand to get free drinks. Our Sachem's death in a dark swamp by friendly fire seems to have been rewritten for popular

consumption. Alternate names for the war, from contemporary English communications such as *the Late Indian War* and *the Narragansett War* had fallen into disuse, although the latter name has given rise to the mistaken assertion in recent scholarship that it somehow means that Wampanoag were Narragansett, Wampanoag territory was Narragansett or that Narragansett's in Wampanoag territory really started the war. This entirely ignores the plethora of communication between Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay Colony with the Wampanoag Nation and the individual Wampanoag tribes in our territory. The documents acknowledge the identity of our leaders and our lands, including Sowams. Tribal deeds from those times, refer to parcels owned by Wampanoag individuals that had married into Wampanoag family's residence of Plymouth or Barnstable County. It disregards known differences such as the distinct languages spoken in southern New England. Most importantly, the assertion disregards the tribe's knowledge that modern day tribal families with lineages from Montaup, Sowams, Pocasset self-identify as Wampanoag and have always done so. Right after Tobias et al. were hanged, tribal members from Narragansett and other tribes poured into Pokanoket territory, and chances are good, that they were doing so for the purposes of inter-tribal councils, rather than to immediately come and fight. I will remind my readers that tribes were capable of more complex interactions than merely pointing and shooting arrows.

The massive shell peage Nation belt, and star medallion were handed over by War Captain Annawon in Squannaconk Swamp in Rehobath. An impatient young Captain Benjamin Church, struggling with translation revealed his annoyance with the 90 year old veteran when he said: at last the Annawon spoke plainly. Interspersed with Annawons' speech must have been a description of the objects, materials and their significance to leadership: Church mistakes the word *moohackees* (for the darkest purple beads in Wampanoag outlined in madder-dyed red quillwork), meant the medallion was bought in Mohawk country. Philips royalties remain at large.

The war that began in Wampanoag territory in Swansea, but really began in our territory in Plymouth, with the hanging of Metacomets counselors. Or maybe it began in 1620. Of the trial in Plymouth where Native men were retained to serve as advisors that no one would be required to listen to, little more can be said. It looked like the hanging of three innocent and prominent Wampanoag men as a sacrifice for one Christian Wampanoag man. Fabulous things were claimed about the body of John Sassamon, decades later, including that it moved, or began to bleed again when displayed for examination. The hangings made no sense, beyond that it was a quick way to provoke war, whilst making a pretense of following Colony law and procedure.

The English Colonial authorities set an evil precedent by prosecuting tribal members for something that happened on tribal lands, and basically sat back to watch the effects of their action spread. If John Sassamon had in some way insinuated the land he cheated and took for himself and his family at Assawompsett was going to become Plymouth Colony land, he may have simultaneously disgusted King Philip for the last time while entitling Winslow and others in Plymouth Colony leadership to feel confident about making a huge issue of his death. But, if Wampanoag leaders had come into town to stop the hanging, I believe their deaths would have followed immediately after. All of the Wampanoag people, instead of just a portion of the Nation, could have been murdered or enslaved.

I do not doubt, had the Colonial governments been reasonable, that more Christian converts may have thought about turning themselves in for protection, as they did in Massachuseak, Nipmuc and at least one Wampanoag community early in this conflict. But the ones who did find themselves faced with the harsh reality of slavery to the English, death by exposure to the elements on the tiny Boston Harbor islands: Deer, Paddocks and Georges Islands; or capture by Atlantic pirates. Some Native men were taken from those concentration camps and put to work against the Wampanoag and other members of the Confederation as scouts, Benjamin Church would claim the lion's share of credit and payment in rounding up enemies of the English. Church and others like him, including strangely enough, *Quaker* English Captains, would be able to continually loot our southern New England tribes for able bodied Native men ages 16 to 60. Their Native companies fought in the northwest in New York, into northeast into Nova Scotia, other Canadian points, and Jamaica and Barbados. It was not surprising at the end of King Philips War, that those who consented to selling off all of their lands were promised a chance to get released from Deer Island early. Some of the families, Awassamog, Gould, Stevens, etc., would give up on Natick and other pray towns and move to Marthas Vineyard. Other Northeastern tribes had significant losses too, but may have suffered a worse fate if things had gone differently.

It has long been true than Native people do not like to speak the names of those who have died, out of respect. That was one consideration that gave me pause in writing about the war and massacre at all. It is good to have a clear timeline, I did not dwell on every step of the hundreds of miles traversed by thousands of Wampanoag in 1675-1676, nor explore every interaction with other tribes. A Pocumtuck-Sokoki-Mohawk war scarred the northern Connecticut River valley in the vicinity of Deerfield years before the Turners Falls Massacre. One of the reasons the English manifested both a strong racism against Native people, while wanting to keep them nearby, was the attitude that Indian towns created a

buffer of protection for the English colonists towns from other tribes in North America that might choose to attack them.

Tribal members had a good working knowledge of the people, places, and events of King Philips War and following wars; Guardian of Indian records for Marthas Vineyard communities mention of the death of the last person (unnamed) to have such a good command of the seventeenth century war, they passed on circa the early in the nineteenth century. Quite a few Native men and women learned the English alphabet and writing system and used it to compose letters, land deeds, songs, and histories in our language. The shortage of Native writings dating from those times and the ensuing centuries does not imply that nothing was written down; documents expressing heretical viewpoint were suppressed, items were stolen from Native homes as late as the 19th century in Aquinnah, and at least one historical society near Montaup sold antique Wampanoag writings to raise funds in the 20th century. Wampanoag items have gone mainly into private non-Native collections that, sadly, may never see the light of day again.

At the end of the war (in southern New England), our tough Native leaders made their way back-along the rivers and familiar trails, now route 146 through Smithfield, or route 140 winding down from Mt. Wachusett past Redemption Rock through Nipmuc into Wampanoag territory. Sometimes I think they returned to negotiate the terms of peace, or continue the fight, providing by any means cover whilst others departed the vicinity. Our people made the trek, boat trips and horseback rides to neutral territory in New York and some fell prey to Connecticut Colony forces under Major Talcot. The Wampanoag were apparently the new residents that Dutch commented on pleasant trade relations with at that time. I think it was fitting that Metacomet, Weetamoo and Annawon, Totoson and Tyask came back to their own lands to live or die, and hopefully found peace in the return.

Tribal members make a point of visiting places such as King Philips Seat, King Philips Cave, Massasoit's house and the spring. Because generations of tribal descendants have paid their respects, keeping a memory of the war alive, it has helped to ensure these places still exist today. In thinking about landmarks of the war, it seems that tribes split up to perform annual ceremonies for the countless kin who were killed and those condemned to exile; to heal their own grief-stricken hearts. They were apprehended quickly by the English and Native scouts and put to death, as dangerous symbols of other roads that could have been taken. In doing so, the colonists made a limiting choice for themselves and for their descendants. The Wampanoag people managed to hold onto a sense of themselves and continued the work of their ancestors by cultivating patience, a sense of humor, and by being honest

with themselves. Whilst Wampanoag survivors had to adapt, we continued to dwell together, influencing each other and drawing our sustenance and guidance from the same sources our ancestors did. In the essentials we remain the same.

For myself, I'd like to think that the memory of this place by the Falls is being re-examined through this joint town-tribal project for a reason. While acknowledging we all have different perspectives on this shared history, working to preserve the site has brought Northeastern tribal descendants and townspeople together again. So long as we keep things in perspective, allow space for differences, and above all treat the people who perished with the dignity and respect they did not receive in life, we will be making some advances towards healing and draw more meaningful lessons from this war.