

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

MESSAGE FROM THE EDUCATION DIRECTOR

As the Education Director for the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, it is my responsibility to keep abreast of the research, policy development and funding opportunities, as well as the needs of the tribal community – whether direct and indirect. While the work in the academic arena is supplemental to the public/tribal school curriculum, cultural education is ongoing and provided in a number of environments through-out the school year and through the summer months. Much of the work is dedicated to guiding and supporting the healthy development of tribal youth, by providing the tools needed to culturally thrive, and seamlessly navigate between 2 worlds.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

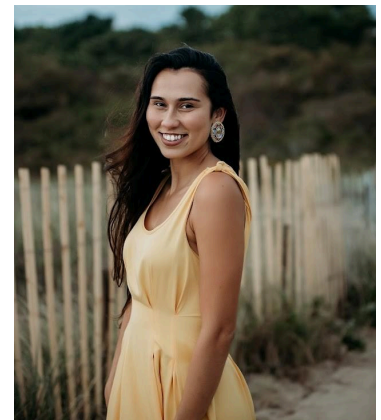
The mission is to promote, support, and advocate for the educational achievements of tribal members and their families by supporting efforts to complete primary, secondary, and post-secondary educational/vocational programs that provide opportunities for advancement in the general society and most importantly the development of tribal capacity to affect our own destiny.

Composition – 9 members; Vacancies: 7

DEPARTMENT GRANTS & BUDGETS

State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP), funded by the US Department of Education/Office of Indian Education, October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023, \$1,095,191; **Positions:** Education Director, Program Manager (FT), Cultural & Outreach Coordinator (FT), and an Education Contractor. **Services:** To partner with School Districts and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to teach the educators to impact more effective educational services for Native students; to build the education department’s capacity to work with Native students, educators, and others to improve educational experiences of Native students.

American Rescue Plan-American Indian Resilience in Education (ARP-AIRE), funded by US Department of Education/Office of Indian Education, November 29, 2021 - November 28, 2024, \$1,342,519. **Positions:** Education Director, Program Manager (FT), and an Education Contractor. **Services:** Direct education and cultural services, which includes, learning seasonal activities contributing to construction of lodges and actual construction; participation in activities to construct a tribal representative structure, mural, etc. at partner districts; and educating youth on the whaling history of the tribe, utilizing the digitized exhibit, to build their capacity to understand and communicate that understanding to others. Lunch bunches, Tribal Boys and Tribal Girls (White Bison curriculum), Driver’s Ed, Tutoring, Dual Enrollment,



College & Career (FAFSA, Applications, Visits, and preparation). **Talia Landry, Program Manager; Darius Coombs, Cultural and Outreach Coordinator; Sassamin Weeden, Administrative Assistant.**



Native American Teacher Retention Initiative (NATRI), funded by US Department of Education/Office of Indian Education, October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2028, \$2,397,208. **Positions:** Education Director, Assistant Education Director (FT), Program Manager (FT), and Administrative Assistant. **Services:** To recruit and retain Native American Teachers from Federally Recognized Tribal Nations to join public K-12 education careers; support interested students in the completion of their teaching degree and licensure; create professional development opportunities for pre-service and in-service educators, both Native and non-Native; support effective, culturally inclusive school environments, pedagogies, methodologies, and more to help retain Native American staff and support Native American students. **Brad Musquantamashq Lopes (Aquinnah Wampanoag), Program Manager; John Hanlon, Education Contractor; Sassamin Weeden, Administrative Assistant.**



Indian Education Formula Grant, funded by US Department of Education/Office of Indian Education Formula Grants, July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024, \$144,953. **Services:** In partnership with 7 districts, including the Weetumuw School, academic and cultural services are offered to Native children in the districts, and their peers, to increase the self-esteem, strength of identity, and knowledge of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. Objectives are to: increase parent participation, professional development, increase academic achievement, cultural identity and awareness, decrease drop-out rate, and support student At-Risk. **Gertrude Kitty Hendricks Miller, Coordinator**



FIGHTING THE FIGHT & MEETING THE CHALLENGES

In Calendar Year 2023, the Department approached the introduction, preservation, and sustainability of the culture in a number of approaches:

CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

Tribal Boys Inception

Tribal Boys is a cultural enrichment after school program which focuses on teaching and maintaining our traditional ways and values for our youth. In this day and era it is extremely important to focus on this and instill in our children the pride, respect, and cultural identity that they deserve. The program presents to the youth include cultural history, traditions, ceremony, traditional medicines, visiting with elders, traditional songs, fences, language, fishing, and much more. Darius Coombs and Isaiah Peters guide the youth through these programs for the youth.



Traditional Pre-Contact Village at 12 Acres

To begin the efforts of recreating 12 Acres Village at the traditional lands of 12 acres, currently owned by the town of Mashpee off of Rte 130, the Education Department led a Traditional Summer homesite construction project on Maushop Farm. Interns were employed and were taught traditional skills of homesite making, led by culture keepers, Darrel Wixon, Darius Coombs, CheeNulka Pocknett, and Annawon Weeden. To begin, a group of Youth Traveled to Connecticut to peel bark off trees for construction. Another group of interns were employed and taught traditional harvesting skills for resources to help build the structures such as cattail and bulrush, led by culture keepers, Linda Coombs, Melanie Roderick, Erin Paul, and Talia Landry.



Different communities were invited

to participate in this harvest gathering as well. Lead women workers have continued efforts of weaving mats through the fall.

The site has been developed with a cooking area and arbor, drying rack, and summer weeq8 with beds. Efforts to cover the home will be completed this summer while we conduct construction on the 12 Acres site.



Top: Culture Keepers and Interns Pictured Harvesting Natural Materials and Preparing Them For Mat Making



Top: 12 Acres Layout of Village Site Off Route 130

Left: Interns Learning How to Construct Traditional Weeq8 Frame and Benches

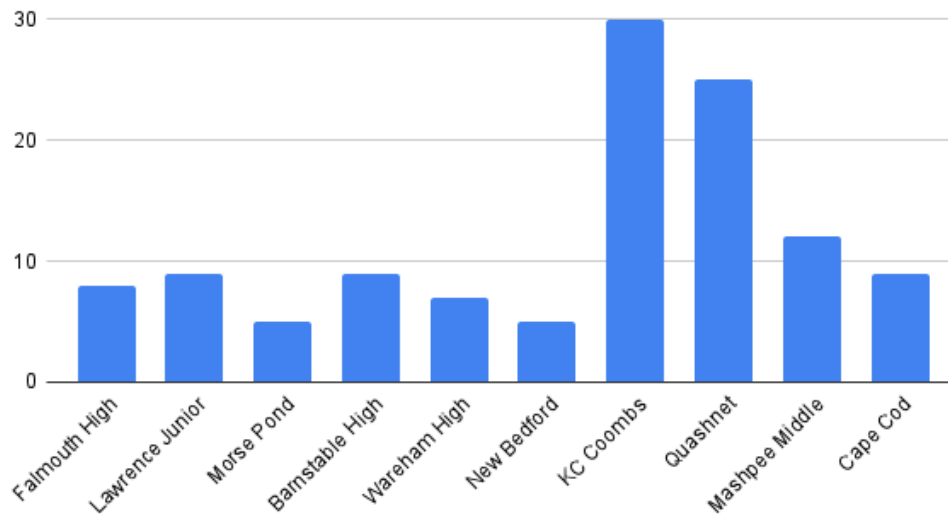
CULTURAL PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

- Education sponsored Beading and Ribbon skirt workshops attracted a good number of interested youth and a parent or auntie participation. Mrs. Tia Pocknett showed some of our young girls the different beading methods, where they completed multiple projects. They learned brick stitch, flat stitch, raised pendant work and loom work. We consistently had about 6-8 girls participating each week from ages 9 to 15 years old. Mrs. Nitana Hicks-Greendeer led a ribbon skirt workshop where participants made matching skirts. About 20 participants learned the basics of ribbon skirt making. Young students aided their family in cutting, measuring, and sewing. Siblings made matching skirts, mother and daughters, aunts and nieces, and grandmothers and granddaughters.



- Lunch Bunches are being held Monday through Thursday at KC Coombs (Grades PreK - 2, 20+ Students) and Quashnet School (Grades 3 - 6, 30+ Students) and Mashpee Middle High School (Grades 7 - 12) during lunches according to the staggered schedule. Additional lunch bunches are also being held at Morse Pond, Lawrence Junior High School, Falmouth High School, and Barnstable High School. Meetings with students at Wareham and New Bedford High School have also begun to occur on a smaller scale.

Wôpanâak Students Served by ARP-AIRE Grant (SY 2023 - 2024)



- Indian Education established after school cultural programming during “*Our Cultural Community*” at Falmouth Elementary Schools and has established a presence at “*Beyond Our School Time*” after school at Wareham Elementary Schools.
- Waquoit Bay Estuary Research and Reserve Collaborative STEM and TEK Educational Programming School Visits:
 - Barnstable Public Schools Grade 3
 - Wareham Public Schools Grade 4
 - Sandwich Public Schools Grade 5
 - Falmouth Public Schools Grade 6
 - Dennis Yarmouth Public Schools Grade 7
 - Bourne Public Schools Grade 7
- Bourne Public Schools 5th Grade Visit to MWT Museum, Meetinghouse, and Tribal Pawâw Grounds for culturally inclusive STEM activities.
- Work has begun on trying to get a space at Falmouth High School, comparable to the Indian Education Room at Mashpee Middle High School, Morse Pond, and Lawrence.
- The tribe held the Neekun (Summer) Camp, under the direction of Kitty Hendricks from July 10th to August 4th with 25 Native children ages 5 (by



August 31) through age 9. Camp Counselors were Taylor Rose (Lead Counselor) who graduated in 2023 with a degree in Education; Kaylee Malgeri (Counselor) who is currently a Junior in college working toward a degree in Early Childhood Education; Kuwah Deetz, Jacyn White (Counselors), and Mahtahunun Deetz (Assistant Counselor). CPR Training/Certification and an Orientation, led by the program coordinator, were part of onboarding for camp staff. The team did great work and the camp received multiple compliments from parents and grandparents this year. Wuneekean (good job) everyone!



- The 12 Acres Campaign: A citizens petition was submitted by Talia Landry to authorize the Mashpee Town Selectboard to transfer three parcels of land (comprising 12 acres) to the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe for the development of a traditional Wampanoag Pre-Contact Village site. The vote passed, with 369 in favor and 79 against, exceeding the 2/3rds support needed. This showed that Mashpee residents overwhelmingly support the project.
- Monthly workshops, sponsored by the Education Department, continued into 2023. The workshops were well received from the community and the Zoom participation exceeded 100 attendees per session on many occasions. Presentations were as follows:
 - *“Food Sovereignty”* led by Danielle Greendeer (Mashpee Wampanoag)
 - *“Letter from Barnstable Jail: William Apess and the Plea for Mashpee Sovereignty”* led by professor Drew Lopenzina, Ph.D., Old Dominion University
 - *“The First Thanksgiving: Dispelling the Myth!”* led by Linda Coombs (Aquinnah Wampanoag)
 - *“Tribal Climate”* led by Casey Thornbrugh (Mashpee Wampanoag)
 - *“Cranberry Day: An Introduction”* led by author Janette Vanderhoop (Aquinnah Wampanoag)

These presentations via ZOOM were open to the community and public at large, and focused on mainly Wampanoag history and perspectives.

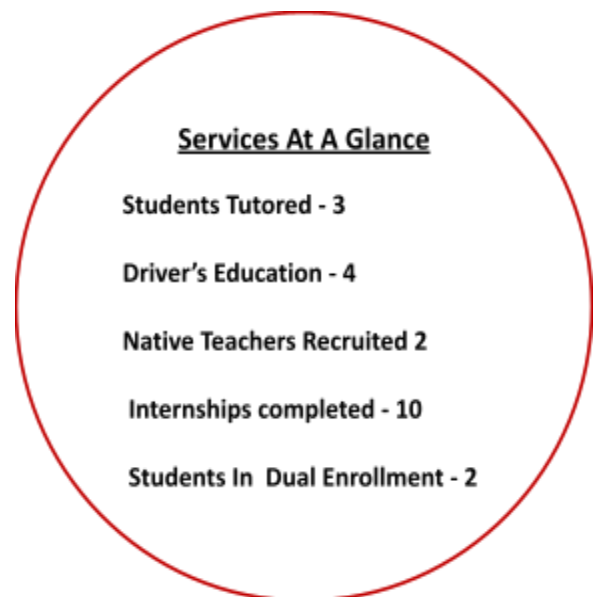
- Held an Indian Education meeting with Local Education Agencies (LEA’s) to renew partnerships and begin planning for next school year on February 28th via Zoom. Representatives from Bourne, Falmouth, Sandwich, Barnstable, New Bedford, Wareham, and the Weetumuw School were in attendance. ALL documentation returned for the school year 2023 - 2024.
- The Annual Indian Education Public Hearing was held on Tuesday, April 4 via Zoom. Turnout was extremely poor. The hearing is a vehicle by which the community can learn about programming, and the program staff can hear from parents and the community. The new application for school year 2023 - 2024 was submitted and approved by the Office of Indian Education.
- A mid-winter meeting with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and their curriculum framework consultants in Social Studies provided the opportunity for the tribe to offer up a group of Native educators dedicated to the creation and development of Wampanoag and Native curriculum and coursework. The project began in spring

2023 and continues currently to impact what is being taught and learned about our people in the critically important developmental years of learning. This has also been the first time that Native educators have ever had a major impact on curriculum and how it can change from a Native lens as opposed to a Eurocentric/American lens or another culture.

- Quashnet students, as part of **Tribal Boys**, constructed a weeq8, garden, tool-making site, and game area in the quad at Quashnet school led by Darius Coombs and apprentice Isaiah Peters. This site is meant to act as a source of pride, a reminder of continued presence, and as a site for tribal historical and contemporary instruction. Sponsored by the Education Department, **Tribal Boys** learned how to construct the lodge and learn the seasonal activities to bring it to fruition. The Grand Opening for the exhibit will be May 15th for the community.
- The Tribe presented monthly at the Mashpee and Falmouth School Committee meetings. The Mashpee School Committee held its joint meeting with Tribal Council in August 2023 to identify paths for success, needs, and develop future plans. Meetings are recorded on the respective Community TV Channels for town residents.
- Although not a tribal or department-sponsored initiative, the Education Department, Mashpee community, and high school have provided support to the Native Environmental Ambassadors (NEA) as they continue to advocate for the protection and natural rights of herring. Four student ambassadors traveled to Sitka, Alaska with tribal representatives for a cultural exchange, sharing of food, gifts, and recipes. Gifts included *Cape Cod Wampanoag Cookbook* and *Son of Mashpee* books by Earl Mills, Sr., wampum, sassafras, local t-shirts and more sent by tribal members. The initiative is sponsored by the Bioneers, an innovative non-profit organization that highlights breakthrough solutions for restoring the planet and people. Youth Advisor, Talia Landry, coordinates the students and leads in constructing legal instruments used in their advocacy. The youth were invited to the New York Climate Change Week to participate in a Rights of Nature panel hosted by the Global Alliance of Rights of Nature organization. They ended their trip in Palm Springs, California, where they led a panel on rights of nature at the Bioneers Indigenous Rights of Nature Conference.

ACADEMIC & LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMMING

- Two Wampanoag Interns - one from Mashpee and another from Aquinnah - were recruited and placed in the American Conservation Experience (ACE) Internship at the National Seashore for the summer. One of these was with the Natural Resources Division working with Biological Technicians doing field research within the park and the other was with the Education and Interpretation Division providing visitor services in interpreting natural and cultural resources of the area through a culturally inclusive lens and assisting with educational programming for area schools. For interns, housing and a stipend were provided. The goal was for interns to gain valuable work experience and open doors to future employment with the National Park



Service. The two interns met with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland at an event at the Mashpee Wampanoag Government Center during the summer. The Tribal Youth Internship Program seeks to increase science literacy and public communication skills, accomplish mission critical work for the park, and strengthen relationships between the park and the local tribes.

- The Education Department completed the first year of implementation for the 7th Grade Exploratory Course for School Year 2022 - 2023 at the Mashpee Middle High School. The Department paid 66% of the instructors salary while the School District paid the other 34%. Mashpee will resume the contract with instructor Renee Lopes-Pocknett for School Year 2023 - 2024. This adds another Native presence in the schools. The course focuses on Mashpee Wampanoag historical and contemporary events, as well as who we are as a people.
- A ten (10) workshop series for educators was sponsored by the Department during Spring 2023 and was a success. Presentations included:
 - *Contemporary Territory and Demographics* led by Rita Lopez
 - *Kinship and Leadership* led by Nitana Greendeer
 - *Praying Towns, Indentured Servitude, and Mashpee’s Incorporation as a Town* led by Darius Coombs and David Weeden
 - *Boarding Schools, Educational Trauma, and “Truth and Reconciliation”*
 - *The Mashpee Nine* led by Chefie Mills and Talia Landry
 - *The Land Suit and Tribe on Trial* led by Chief Mills, Vicky Costa, and Attorney Ann Gilmore
 - *Federal Recognition: General Processes and the Mashpee Petition*
 - *Indian Gaming: Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe* led by Dan Nuey
 - *Aboriginal Hunting, Fishing, and Gathering Rights* led by CheeNulka Pocknett, Buddy Pocknett, and David Green
 - *Cultural Revitalization and Self-Determinization*

All sessions were informative and eye-opening for 50 participating educators and Falmouth and Mashpee community members; 4:15-5:45, at the MMHS Library. Feedback: Remarkable, Awesome, What Resilience! [Videos can be found on YouTube.](#) The workshop was extremely invigorating and informative. Participants asked meaningful questions. It fired us up – where’s that spirit now?

- The Education Department, working alongside SmokeSignals, worked to create a traveling exhibit piece designed to teach about the history of Mashpee Wampanoag Whaling Practices and an [accompanying digital exhibit](#) led by Ramona Peters and Jason Mancini. As indicated here, the exhibit has already traveled to a few locations and will continue to be available for outside organizations and schools to host.
- A new, more versatile and user friendly [Education Website](#) has begun to be developed with SmokeSignals. This effort is expected to receive more traffic and longer views, for more effective means of communications with the tribal

**MWT Whaling Exhibit
SY 2023 - 2024**

November 2023	Mashpee Middle High School
December 2023	Provincetown Elementary
January 2024	MWT Government Center
February 2024	MWT Government Center
March 2024	Falmouth High School
April 2024	Center for Coastal Studies
May 2024	Wareham Elementary



community and public. The site was launched in February 2024!

- **BIG PLANS!** Thirteen of the fourteen (13/14) 2023 Mashpee Middle High School graduates have been accepted to post-secondary institutions. One has taken a Gap Year to work and join the National Guard, with expectations to earn money for college. Kutâputunumuw, to all in the Chairman's office for the graduation certificates and stoles!
- A tribal member is attending Haskell Indian Nations University in School Year 2023 - 2024. The Education Department was able to assist with travel to the University, located in Lawrence, Kansas.
- The Native American Teacher Retention Initiative grant was submitted on July 24th to the Department of Education and Office of Indian Education. Sixteen (16) awards were expected. The Director worked with Mashpee and Falmouth's Superintendents, Bridgewater State University, and the Collaborative for Education Services to get buy-in and support for supplementing the formal education of Native Teachers and teacher perspectives. Spoiler! The tribe was one of the 16 awardees, totaling just under \$2,200,000 for the next 5 years. Additionally, the tribe is the only tribal entity from the east to receive the award.
- The Education Department has been in discussion with Bridgewater State University to consider financial support for Wampanoag students. Specific faculty have assisted the Department with information and data during the writing of the Native American Teacher Retention Initiative application for the US Department of Education and Office of Indian Affairs. English Professor Joyce Rain Anderson and Vice President Deniz Leuenberger are our contacts as we begin this relationship to cultivate opportunities for Native students and future Native teachers.
- Biweekly meetings of the Native Education Council (NEC) of Massachusetts have been underway, with the goal of targeting seats at decision-making tables and for Wampanoag culture to be reflected in the state curriculum. The council is composed of members from the Indigenous Tribes of Massachusetts and is facilitated by Jose Lugo from Collaborative for Education Services, and is seeking a liaison from DESE's Commissioner Office.
- The Education Department provided a *New Employee Orientation* for Mashpee Public School District in August 2023 at the Community and Government Center, then provided words of encouragement at the morning convocation. There were 2 Mashpee Wampanoag teachers in the group of new employees. Barnstable Public School District requested a similar workshop during the October 6th Cape-Wide Professional Development Day, which has led to a more robust future relationship.

