

Sylvester Francis 1896-1959

Sylvester Francis served in **World War I** and was honorably discharged on July 4th, 1920. After the war Sylvester returned home to Indian Island where he worked on the log drives in the spring, and as a trapper in the winter. One of his favorite spots to trap was on a small tributary of the Penobscot River called Sunhaze stream. Later he became the policeman for the Penobscot Nation. From the years of 1938 to 1950 Sylvester was the ferryman shuttling people between Old Town and Indian Island. He was the last ferryman for the Penobscot Nation, a bridge was erected in 1950.



While working as a ferryman for the Penobscot Nation, Sylvester was photographed by the Evinrude outboard motor company. This photograph was used in the company's advertisement campaign.

As a young man, Sylvester was a very accomplished runner. At the age of 16 he won the annual Old Town Nine Mile Marathon. To the right is a photo of Sylvester, 6th from the left, on the starting line of that marathon.



photo courtesy of Nos Histoires De L'lie , www.old-town.org



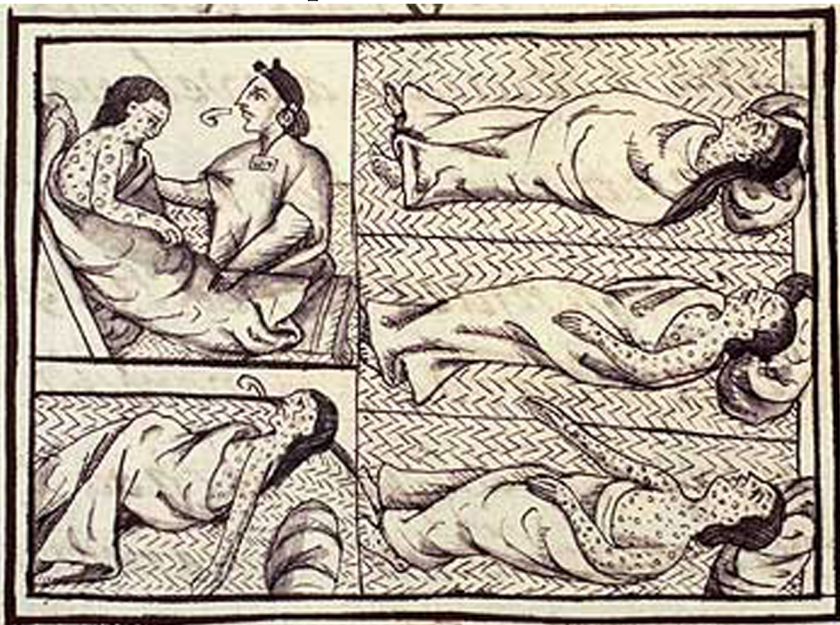
World War I Veteran

“The Great Dying”, Epidemics in Maine

European contact introduced diseases that were devastating to the Native American population in Maine and the Maritimes. At the time no one understood what was happening to the Native American population. Many people were getting a host of diseases such as smallpox, hepatitis, measles, chicken pox, influenza, and even the common flu. Smallpox was the most devastating in the time that is call “the great dying.” An estimated 75% to 90% of the Native American population was lost in this small span of time. Entire villages were wiped out.

While the Native American were dying in great numbers, the European population was surviving. **Jesuit Priests**, who lived among the Indians, remained healthy. We know today that this happened because the Europeans had faced these diseases before and they had built up immunities against these diseases. Even more devastating than loss of population, the Native American people lost faith in their traditional healers in the communities. Tribes and families were torn apart. Respected leaders died along-side villagers. The Native American society and way of life began to crumble.

The beginning of the Great Dying starts the same time that the **Micmac Wars** end. When the Micmac obtained guns from **Port Royal** they may have contracted European diseases.



Today we get shots as children. These immunizations help our bodies fight the diseases by introducing it to the body in small doses. The body reacts by creating antibodies to fight future exposures.



1616-1619

United States Citizenship

Indian Citizen Act

June 02, 1924

In 1924 Congress granted citizenship to all Indians born within the United States who were not yet citizens.

An Act To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to issue certificates of citizenship to Indians.

Be it enacted . . . , That all non-citizen Indians born within the limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States: Provided, That the granting of such citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property.

Source:

[U.S. Statutes at Large, 43:253.]



According to an interview by Robert Grady in 1938 or 1939, once this law was passed, a Penobscot man named Henry Mitchell, went and spoke to an official at the town hall in Old Town, Maine about his right to vote . In the interview Henry Mitchell repeats what the official at city hall told him. “We don't want you people over here. You have your own elections over on the island, and if you want to vote, go over there.”

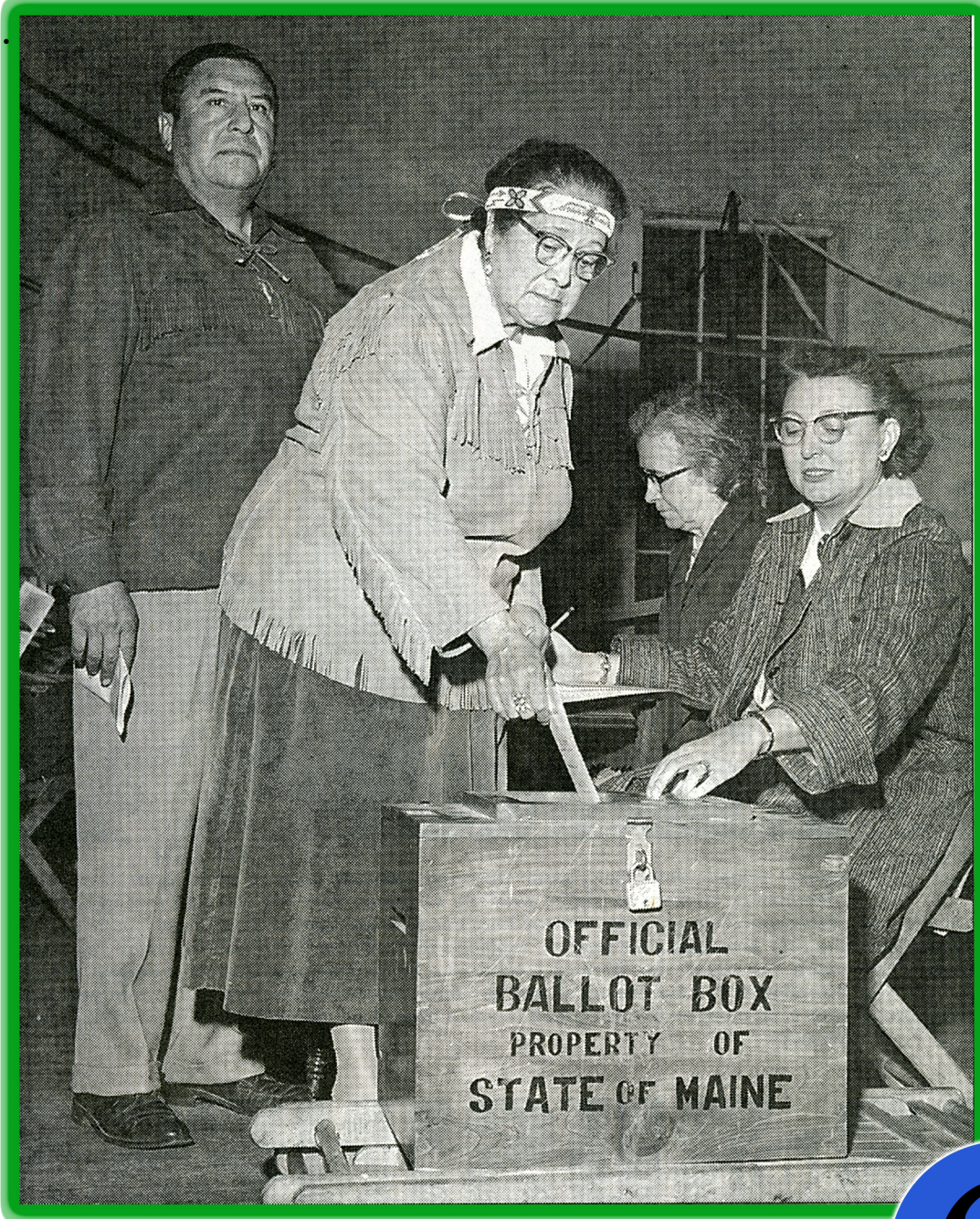
The right to vote in federal elections on the Reservation would not be granted for another 30 years, and another 43 years in State of Maine elections. Penobscots had been voting for their own Chief since the 1850's, and prior to that the Chief was passed down from father to son.

▲ 1924

United States Right to Vote

▲ 1954

Although Native Americans officially became Citizens of the United States in 1924, many states did not recognize the right to vote. The State of Maine was the last state to allow Native Americans to vote in federal elections. In 1954, Maine Native Americans voted in federal elections in their own communities, on the reservations.



Bruce "Chief" Poolaw waits to cast his vote as his wife Lucy Nicolar Poolaw becomes the first Native American in Maine to cast a vote in a federal election.



Wabanaki Confederacy ▲

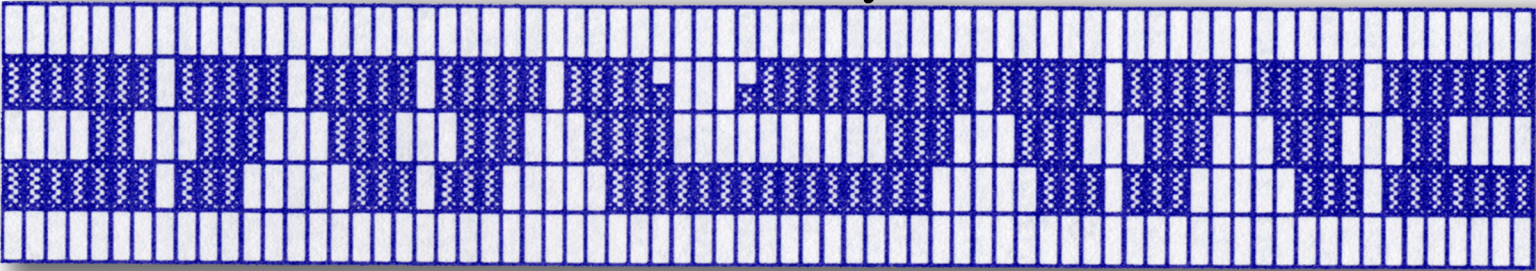
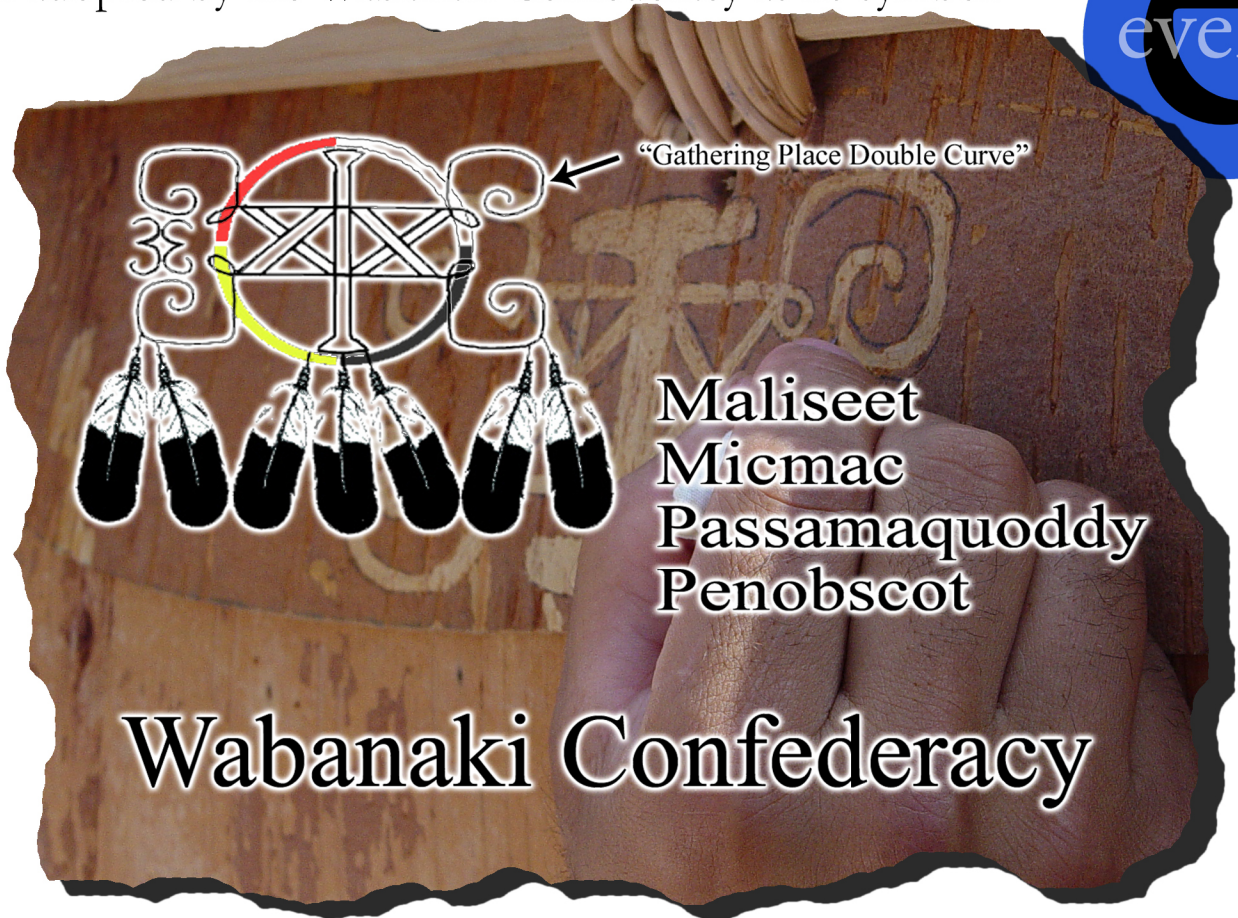


Image of belt from : Mitchell, Lewis. Wapapi Akonutomakonol – The Wampum Records: Wabanaki Traditional Laws. Edited by Robert M. Leavitt and David A. Francis. Fredericton: Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute, University of New Brunswick. (1897) 1990.

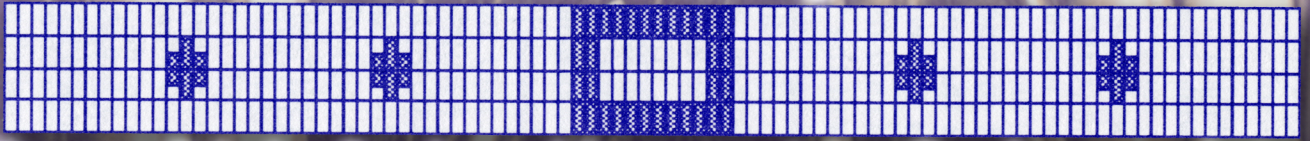
The Wabanaki Confederacy as it appears today includes the tribes of the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot. Historically there were other members. However, since the Confederacy left the **Great Council Fire at Caughnawaga** in the late 1860's, it has included these four groups. The site of the council fire began at Indian Island, but alternates between Micmac, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki communities today. The Confederacy still meets today. They gather to discuss common issues within the Native Americans communities within Maine and the Canadian Maritimes. The “gathering place” double curve has been adopted by the Wabanaki Confederacy as its symbol.



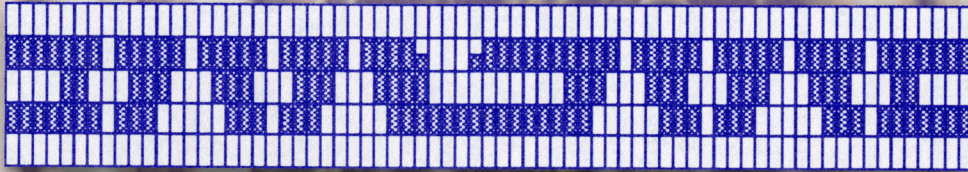
Maliseet
Micmac
Passamaquoddy
Penobscot

Wabanaki Confederacy

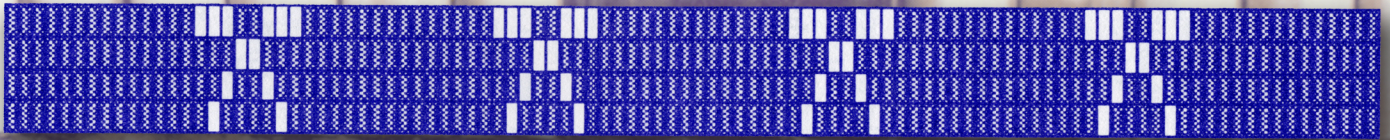
Penobscot Wampum Belts



Wampum Belt that Penobscot delegates carried to **Caughnawaga** during the confederacy with the Iroquois.



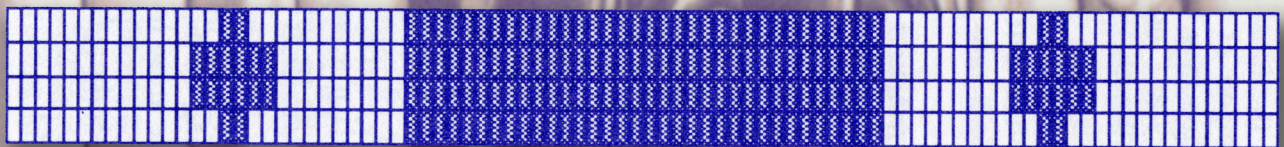
Wampum Belt that represents the “union of the four Eastern tribes in their local alliance.” The triangles represent tribal wigwams of the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot. The pipe in the middle represents peace and alliance, The **Wabanaki Confederacy**.



This Wampum Belt is called the Penobscot War Belt. The dark background stands for war and the four pairs of axes constitute a call to the four nations to join in taking up the tomahawk in common cause.



This Wampum Belt is called the Penobscot Peace Belt.



This Wampum Belt is the Penobscot Mourning Belt. This belt was carried by the delegates when a Penobscot Chief died.

Beads of wampum are white or purple and manufactured from quahog shells. Belts were used in diplomatic relationships between confederated tribes.



War Tactics ▲▲

1675ish

When the colonial wars started with **King Philip's War** in 1675, the Native Americans in Maine had the upper hand. Their war tactics were more suited for the area of Maine. Their enemies, the English, were trying to rely on tactics that worked when in the open battlefields of England and other places in Europe. The enemies of the Native Americans in Maine and New England were frustrated with what they called "cowardly fighting." They complained that the Native Americans would ambush them, jumping out from behind rocks or trees to shoot or attack them and then flee. They complained, that Native Americans would "snipe" them from a distance, getting hit even before they knew the attackers were there. This type of guerilla warfare suited the Native Americans fine because they knew the terrain and they knew the area.

It wasn't until the colonists started to adopt this type of fighting that they started to fare better in the battles. One group in particular used Native Americans to train his men in war tactics. His name was Roger, and his men would be known as Roger's Rangers.



1 items

White Francis BIO d. 1775?

White Francis may have been one of the first Penobscots to die fighting for America. Below is a letter from Captian Neptune Nicolas asking for some assistance for White Francis' daughter, Tellys Money [probably Molly]. This letter is dated 1836, approximately 60 years after the death of White Francis. The letter indicates that White Francis died fighting the British (English) on the Bagaduce River, near Castine Maine. He was fighting for the American cause in the Revolutionary War. The author of the letter, Captian Neptune Nicolas, was born in 1764, making him very young at the time of the battle. According to Joseph Orono, the Chief of the Penobscot Nation at the time of the Revolutionary War, the Penobscots would fight side by side with their American brothers. White Francis fought and sacrificed his life for the American cause.

To the hon^{be} General Court of the State of Maine now in session at Augusta humbly showeth That so hereas White Frances an Indian belonging to the Penobscot Tribe at the time when the English Troops were in possession of what was then called Baguduc & that a part of that tribe as above named were then imbodied there with americans and were then furnished by the Americans with armor & ammunition to fight the said English Troops which they did under Major Gilman and that the above named white Frances an Indian was then in the ranks of the Indians by my side fighting the English, when I see him fall by my side by a musket ball from the English and that I did endeavor to raise him but to no purpose he was slain & left behind to the great disadvantage to his Daughter now living at Indian Old Town by the name of Telly Money and has remained very poor ever since the Death of her Father as above Stated. I have been and am now a living witness to the fact and that the said Telly Money do ask some assistance of your Ho^{be} Body as in duty I am bound to pray

Indian Old Town Feby 25, 1836 Capt Neptune Nicholas being 72 years old

To the Hon^{ble} General Court of the State of Maine now in session at Augusta humbly showeth That so hereas White Frances an Indian, belonging to the Penobscot Tribe, at the time when the English Troops were in possession of what was then call Baguduc, & that a part of that tribe, as above named, were then imbodied then with americans, and were then furnished by the Americans with armor & ammunition to fight the said English Troops, which they did under Major Gilman, and that the above named White Frances, and Indian was then in the ranks of the Indians, by my side fighting the English, when I see him fall by my side, by a musket ball from the English and that I did endeavour to raise him but to no purpose, he was slain & left behind to the great disadvantage to his Daughter now living at Indian Old Town, by the name of Telly Money, and has remained very poor ever since the Death of her Father as above Stated. I have been and am now a living witness to the fact, and that the said Telly Money, do ask some assistance of your Ho^{be} Body, as in duty I am bound to pray

Indian Old Town Feby 25, 1836 Capt Neptune Nicholas being 72 years old