Supported by The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center

Natôquhsunônak InterTribal Alliance

Restoring collective care for Northeast Ancestral Waters

Relationships between Mashantucket Pequot people and other Eastern Woodland Tribes has always been, and will always be, a very important part of our existence. The ancient connection between Algonquin Tribes is clearly reflected within our languages and relationships.
There is a connected history that our people have lived & endured together.

Order of Information

- Brief introduction to the ITA (InterTribal Alliance)
- Northeast Place-Based Visual
- Relational Kinship, Knowing/Unlearning/Healing

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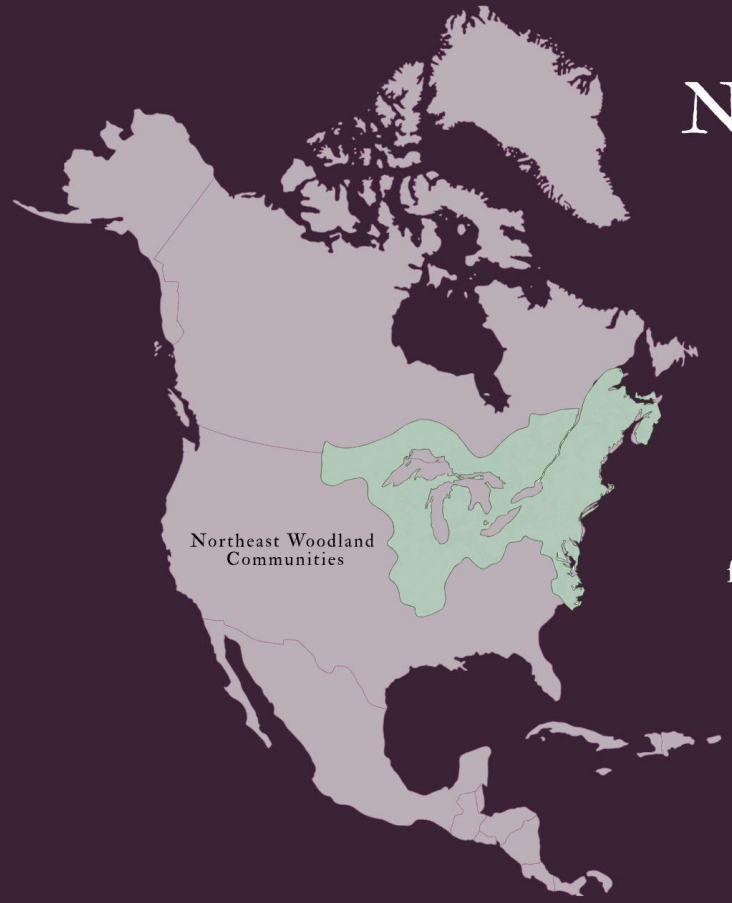
Natôquhsunônak InterTribal Alliance (ITA)

The ITA has been led and designed by
Mashantucket Pequot cultural leader Michael Thomas.

Through the format of relationships and community centered objectives, we work together in a non hierarchical foundation. Keeping with this, our team consists of many other individuals who have contributed in small and large ways to this effort.

We recognize the InterTribal Alliance is one effort among dozens of other Native non-profits, individuals, and tribal Nations who have worked for generations on the protection and healing of our relatives, land and inherit earth rights.

ITA Place Based Location of Our Region



Northeast Woodland

The tribal communities represented here extend beyond political geographic borders and reflect longstanding relationships among our relatives across the region.

Our ongoing connections continue to shape the familiar artistic styles, advocacy, language, history and cultural identity found throughout our territories today.

ITA Mission

Establish and maintain a Tribal Community-based and **ancestral waterways protection-focused Eastern Woodland Inter-Tribal Alliance** to identify threats, mutual support activities regarding Tribal ancestral waterways conservation issues.

Goals

1. Create shared Tribal advocacy for the protection of ancestral waterways, water-dependent species and related access by the people of our Tribal Communities.

2. Hear information directly from Tribes about their highest water resource protection needs – ask the public to help honor the inherent rights of Tribes and nature while supporting the natural access needs of future generations.

3. Reinterpret the commonly accepted false history of these lands and current-day environmental challenges in order to shape solutions that are developed directly from a shared Tribal Community perspective.

4. Embrace and organize outside supporters who will help to advance our Inter-Tribal conservation efforts.

Relational Kinship

Relationship building, healing, and knowing moves beyond human and includes everything else. It encomposes ‘the whole’ all beings, all nations. The health of a place, the soil, and the land is inseparable from the well-being of the people and relatives who reside there.

This kinship is the most widely referenced, and likely best understood amongst folks involved in this work. Many books, articles, and academics will study this connection and advocate for the framework of *Indigenous Knowledge,* which universally includes this understanding.

Image: Brooke Waldron

Building Relational Kinship

I have considered these 3 areas strictly as it relates to building working relationship with, or among Native people cross-culturally.

Knowing - The verb of knowing includes what we are familiar with, but do not have a lived experience in. Understanding what you do know, and the recognition that there is more to be learned. What an individual is aware of, but is not taking into consideration.

Unlearning - The verb of unlearning requires an emotional and intellectual disconnection from the widely accepted Knowing. A requirement for an individual to practice new methods of thinking to accept new information.

Healing - The verb of healing is a place that looks very different for each person. It is not a collective experience, and so healing is mutual understanding to apply your Knowing in service to 'the whole' kinship. It is accepting that Healing as a verb, is a continuous effort in relationship that de-centers the self and applies care to The Whole.

stock image

Relational Kinship- **Knowing**

Most environmental crisis today stems from a capitalist perspective and method of extraction. Introducing the idea of authority ownership praised as powerful and generally patriarchal.

For Native communities specifically this was legislatively enforced, through the Detriabalization Era, resulting in loss of land, banning of Native languages and cultural practices, family dispersal and forced assimilation policies lasting throughout the 1970s.

Relational Kinship among Native and Indigenous people includes generations of violence, harm and shared residue of subjugation through colonialism, and the lasting structures still operating under that framework.
Our communities have a shared history that does not need translation, but does need space to breathe.

Tribal Chairman George Gillette weeping as Secretary of Interior J. A. Krug signs the contract for the Garrison Dam in North Dakota. AP/Wide World Photo, 1948.

Relational Kinship - **Unlearning**

The leadership of Native people is an example of Relationship, the system of *Indigenous Knowledge*- as most understand it, is not an alternative to "real knowledge" it is- in its purest form, a System of Care.

We are often taught throughout a settler education system to trust authority, and to trust expertise. But with an observational eye, we can understand that often Expertise almost exclusively comes from institutions, systems of exclusion and western-thought.

Image: Turtle Island, artist Brooke Waldron

Relational Kinship - **Recovery** & **Healing**

There is a pattern of behavior from Non-Native Thought and Society that disallows the rage, feelings of loss and cultural extraction from the conversation, and prefers suppression.
However, the shared generational memory is what keeps us in the fight, and the fight is the effort.

It's the requirement that inspires each generation to not simply be a bystander of injustice, the anger and the hurt is transferred to Sacred Energy that forces leadership and collaboration for the benefit of The Whole. This energy in it's duality is Love for community.

Image: Schemitzun 2019 Brooke Waldron

Kutaputomuq - Thank You

Relational Kinship can be a powerful, inspiring force of systemic change. The question is asked

What is next?
What does it ask of us?

Ruth Anna Buffalo, North Dakota State Representative, District 27 the first Native American Democratic woman elected to the North Dakota Legislature.