

Report of the Traditional Government of the Nipmuc Nation

December 2018

***** Please note that the Traditional Government and Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council are NOT the same. They are two different entities with different purposes.*****

What is the Traditional Government of the Nipmuc Nation?

The Constitution of the Nipmuc Nation, SECTION II Tribal Government, Part H, 1 defines the Traditional Government as:

“The Traditional Government of the Nipmuc Nation shall cultivate and perpetuate the customs, heritage, and religion of the Nipmuc Nation and shall include the current Hassanamisco Chief and an Elders Council whose members shall have attained sixty (60) years of age.”

The Traditional Government is in fact the continuation of the old Hassanamisco Tribal Council. One of our principal responsibilities is the stewardship of the Hassanamesit Reservation.



The Elders Council has an additional mission –

The Elders Council of the Nipmuc Nation shall cultivate and perpetuate our culture, history, and customs and encourage the harmony and unity of all of our People.

Any enrolled member of the Nipmuc Nation age 60 and over is welcome to serve on the Elders Council. The Elders meet on the 2nd Saturday of each month at 10 am except during the winter. There is a call-in line for those who cannot attend in person. Visitors are welcome at these meetings. Per the Elders Council Bylaws, there is a core group of 10 Elders with voting rights. Those members include (and can/do change):

Nellie Toney –Chair

Nancy Charleston – Treasurer

Gail Schuyler

Chief Walter Vickers

Sydney Schuyler

Ethel Toney

Muriel Geter

Valerie Wilson

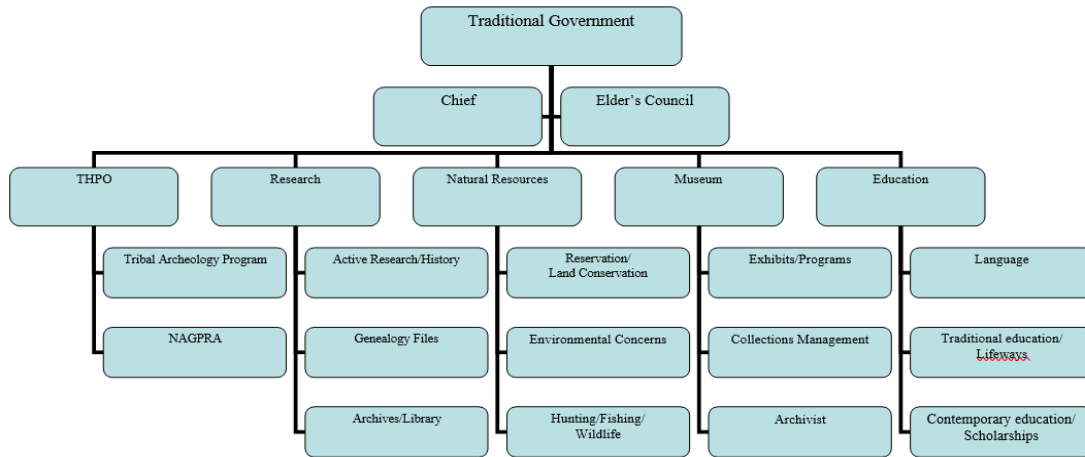
Kenneth Hamilton, Sr

Denise Lewis

The **current Chief or Sonksq** (female leader) of the Nipmuc Nation and Hassanamisco Band is Cheryll Toney Holley.

Responsibilities of the Traditional Government

Below is the chart outlining the Traditional Government’s responsibilities.



What does the Traditional Government do all year?

As stated in the definitions above, the traditional government is responsible for the continuation of our culture. To that end, several programs and activities are sponsored by the traditional government. These activities are open to all Nipmucs regardless of enrollment status.

Powwow

The Nipmuc Nation Powwow (once known as the Hassanamisco Indian Fair) is held on the last Sunday in July at the reservation. It is open to the public, charges admission to all, and offers drumming, vendors, and dancing. This is the main fundraiser for the reservation.

Strawberry Moon

Held on the 3rd Saturday in June. This ceremony followed by a potluck social focuses on forgiveness. In 2018, we had a special forgiveness ceremony for Job Kattennit, an historic Nipmuc who served as an English scout during King Philip’s War.

Winter Social

This is a winter gathering focused on sharing our connections with each other. This winter it will be held in January and will include a potluck feast and storytelling.

Hassanamisco Indian Museum

The Museum building is still closed for renovation but activities continue on either the reservation or at the tribal office. School and scout visits are welcome. Each year a Native American Youth camp stays at the reservation. Visits to area schools have been suspended due to not enough volunteers. Language classes at the tribal office have been suspended but online classes are held once a month. When the Museum reopens, it will more accurately reflect Nipmuc history and culture throughout the years, have classroom space, and include visiting artists and instructors on a regular basis.

Reservation Improvements

The electricity on the grounds failed just before powwow this year. The underground wiring will be replaced in the spring. The damaged wetu was taken down and the fire pit beneath it is now the cooking area for events and camping. A microburst damaged the path put in last year by redirecting the brook down the middle of the path. A new path was cleared by the Agroecology Encounter led by Nipmucs Kristen Wyman and Nia Holley in September.

Nipmuc Indian Development Corporation (NIDC)

The traditional government re-activated the NIDC to serve as a vehicle for funding community development projects. All the work and programs created and sponsored this year were funded through the NIDC.

Food Sovereignty Programming

Many Nipmucs have family members that have diabetes and/or heart disease and many of our tribal members have died from these diseases. The NIDC, the Elders Council, the Women's Group, and the Sonksq are working on ways to reduce these diseases in our community. One of the best ways to do this is to change what we eat. For the past four years, we have grown vegetables, berries, and herbs on the reservation, encouraged Nipmucs and their families to start food gardens at home, and taught medicine-making and plant identification.

Reservation Garden

The garden begun by the Women's Group at the reservation did not do so well this year. Workers on the reservation accidentally mowed down the herbs, blueberry, and elderberry plants. At powwow this year, the corn was knocked down and destroyed by children in attendance. The goal of growing food at the reservation is to produce food from non-GMO seeds for distribution to elders and other Nipmuc families -- with the ultimate goal to change what we eat thereby reducing diabetes and heart disease in our community. The ground was cleared during the agroecology event in September and will be replanted next spring. We are looking for funding to add fencing around the site to prevent damage next year.

Home Gardens

Kristen Wyman and Nia Holley from Gedakina assisted Nipmuc families in establishing home gardens with the same goals for distributing food to Nipmuc families. The seeds were donated by the Sonksq.



Food Assessment

Funded by a grant through the First Nations Development Institute (FNDI), Nipmuc youth surveyed 200 Nipmuc families from all bands over nine months. The results of the assessment were distributed via email to those on the email list and presented publicly as shown below. The next step is to fine tune our food sovereignty goals. All Nipmucs are welcome to attend and contribute to these meetings.



Youth Cohort

Nippeash Waapemoash is a tribal civics/rites of passage initiative to address the unique challenges Nipmuc youth experience and to promote a positive sense of self-worth and cultural pride within the tribe. Through this program, our youth are developing skills and values relating to histories, traditional arts, farming, and tribal government/civics that will one day assist these young people in leading our future.

The program began this past June and already the youth have impressed our leadership and elders with their thoughtful questions and answers, imaginative approaches to difficult issues, and the older children's guidance of younger members of the cohort.



Women's Group

Squaognipmug Waantook Society is a group of Nipmuc women from different bands and non-bands who meet once a month to talk, share, and work on crafts and other projects. Occasional field trips included! We also practice ceremony at the reservation. Below are photos from a hand drum making session and a moccasin workshop.



Homestead Restoration

Rae Gould is leading this effort to restore the 1801 Homestead on the reservation. Once restored, it will re-open as a Museum. The exterior is now finished and the focus has shifted to plans for the completion of the interior.

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

Rae Gould, David White, and Cheryl Holley monitor federally funded construction that may have an impact on historic or sacred Nipmuc landscapes. We also re-inter remains returned to the tribe by Museums, historical societies, and other tribes. We are now working to reinter individuals from Millbury, Wayland, and Worcester in our own homelands.

Websites

The Hassanamisco Indian Museum website is www.nipmucmuseum.org.

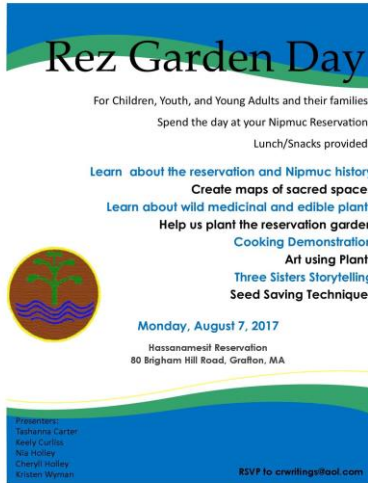
The Nipmuc Indian Development Corporation website is www.nippi.org.

Reservation Extension

We are currently negotiating for the return of land to the reservation. The land will be used to practice stewardship of the land, invigorate our paddling activities and for ceremonial space.



Family/Youth Activities



Rez Garden Day

For Children, Youth, and Young Adults and their families
Spend the day at your Nipmuc Reservation
Lunch/Snacks provided

Learn about the reservation and Nipmuc history
Create maps of sacred spaces
Learn about wild medicinal and edible plants
Help us plant the reservation garden
Cooking Demonstration
Art using Plants
Three Sisters Storytelling
Seed Saving Techniques

Monday, August 7, 2017
Hassanamesit Reservation
80 Brigham Hill Road, Grafton, MA

Facilitators:
Tashanna Carter
Kerly Curtis
Nia Holley
Doreen Hooley
Kristen Wyman

RSVP to cwrlings@aol.com



Let's Go Fishing!

Saturday, September 16th
10 am to noon
Lake Quinsigamond at Regatta Park
Worcester, MA

Come and learn how to fish.
Experienced fishers welcome too!
Free pole and tackle for each child.
Taught by Nipmuc fishermen Doug Geter & Craig Schuyler
Open to Nipmuc Youth of all ages and their families.

Sponsored by
Nipmuc Indian Development Corporation
RSVP & for more information 508-853-5575



NIPMUC FAMILY CAMPOUT

WHEN
May 26, 27, & 28, 2018
Memorial Day Weekend
ALL DAY/ALL NIGHT

WHERE
Hassanamesit Reservation
80 Brigham Hill Rd, Grafton, MA
Explore the Reservation

ALL ARE WELCOME TO CAMP DURING ANY PORTION OF THE WEEKEND
DON'T LIKE CAMPING?
JUST DROP BY ANY TIME DURING THE DAY

RSVP- CHERYL STEDTLER
WATCHCROW@AOL.COM

Sponsored by the Nipmuc Indian Development Corporation & the Traditional Government

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

SATURDAY
Plant the Rez Garden
Food Cooking Demo by Gedakina
Community Potluck

SUNDAY
More Planting
Nipmuc Dance Demo
Planting Moon Ceremony

MONDAY
Paddle the Blackstone
Community Lunch

EACH DAY
Children's Activities
Language Practice
Reading and Sewing
Medicinal Plant Walks
Making Medicine

Massachusetts Native Peoples

For the past two years, we have been actively involved in listening sessions and discussion groups aimed at raising awareness of Native Peoples in the Commonwealth, especially among legislators, and promoting the condition of and needs of tribal groups in Massachusetts. This group is now focusing on the mascot issue in Massachusetts. Everyone is eligible to attend these meetings.

National Park Service Battlefield Protection Grant

We continue to support the efforts of the town of Montague to recover the history of and honor our ancestors who perished at the Massacre at Peskeompskut.

Remembering & Reconnecting:

Nipmucs and the Massacre at Great Falls

A Narrative compiled and presented By the Chaubunagungamaug
Nipmuck Historic Preservation Office and Associates for the Battle of Great
Falls/ Wissatinnewag-Peskeompskut Pre-Inventory Research and
Documentation Project
October 2015

There are many individual Nipmucs who work for and with the Traditional Government to help us accomplish many things.

Tashanna Carter
Licine Carter
Rae Gould
David Tall Pine White
Kristen Wyman
Andrea Smith
Erica Campbell
Danny Campbell
Mrs. Vickers
Eric Gould
Robert and Sarah Stedler

Donald Gould
Sherry Cavers
Crystal Avakian
Nia Holley
Kohar Avakian
Darlene Charleston
Cheryl Stedler
Talin Avakian
Lydia Curliss
Rana Smith
Millie McCowan

Douglas Geter
Elizabeth Santana-Kiser
Ite Santana
Anthony Richardson and family
Ken Gould Sr and his crew
Bud Carter
Robert Carter
Keely Curliss
Kim Toney
Craig Schuyler
Keshon Jackson

Many thanks to these organizations who provide multiple layers of support to Nipmuc People and the Nipmuc Nation-

Gedakina
Suffolk University Law School Indigenous Peoples Rights Clinic
UMass Boston Institute for New England Native American Studies
Five College Native and Indigenous Studies Program
MA Commission on Indian Affairs
Mashpee Wampanoag - Department of Historic Preservation and NAGPRA
Nolumbeka Project

Members of Squaognipmug Waantook Society

Andrea Smith
Jo-Anne Medeiros
Rhonda Symonds
Tashanna Carter
Nancy Charleston
Cheryll Holley
Kim Toney

Lisy Smith
Licine Carter
Michaela Symonds
Crystal Avakian
Darlene Charleston
Rana Smith
Kristem Wyman

