



Abbe Museum

INSPIRING NEW LEARNING ABOUT THE WABANAKI NATIONS WITH EVERY VISIT

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Bar Harbor, Maine
www.abbemuseum.org



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INTRODUCTION TO THE ABBE MUSEUM

Welcome to the Abbe Museum! The museum's mission is to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit.

Originally founded in 1928 by Dr. Robert Abbe, the Abbe Museum now has two locations. Our original location is in Acadia National Park at Sieur de Monts Spring. This small trailside museum is one of only two left in the country and examines the archaeological evidence left behind by the Native people of this region.

By the 1990s, the Abbe's 2,000-square-foot museum at Sieur de Monts Spring had become inadequate to house the growing collections and provided no space for indoor programs, changing exhibitions, or research. In 1997, the Abbe purchased the former YMCA building in downtown Bar Harbor. Opened in 2001, the Abbe Museum Downtown focuses on the history and contemporary life, communities, and art from the four federally recognized tribes of Maine: the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot, collectively known as the Wabanaki.



Pictured: Historic photo of the Abbe Museum at Sieur de Monts



Pictured: Exterior of the Abbe Museum Downtown



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THE ABBE MUSEUM COLLECTION

From the initial focus on archaeology, the Abbe soon expanded its scope to include ethnographic materials from the 17th through 20th centuries. In 1931, Mary Cabot Wheelwright, founder of the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian in Santa Fe, donated an important collection of Native American baskets and other objects. Other major basket collections have been given to the Museum, and as a result, it holds the largest and best-documented collection of Maine Indian basketry.

Today the Abbe's collection focuses on contemporary and historic Native American art, artifacts, and objects from Maine and the Northeast, totaling over 70,000 items. Ash splint and sweetgrass baskets, birchbark containers and canoes, other varied traditional and contemporary art forms, and archaeological artifacts that span more than 12,000 years of history represent the ever-evolving culture of Wabanaki people.

As the collections grew, the Museum also expanded its educational role. Small exhibits on subjects such as basketmaking and the Museum's founding complemented the displays of archaeological artifacts.



Pictured (top to bottom): Pack Basket by Richard Siliboy, Mi'kmaq Nation; Basket Sculpture by Shane Perley-Dutcher, Maliseet; Birchbark Cylinder by David Moses Bridges, Passamaquoddy; Lupine Basket by Sarah Sockbeson, Penobscot

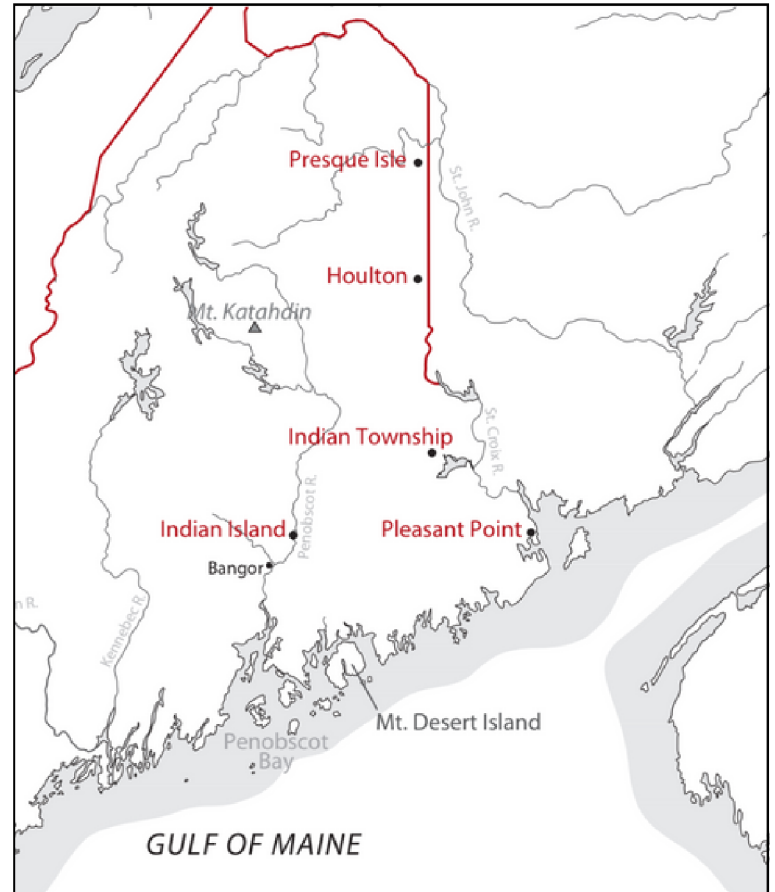


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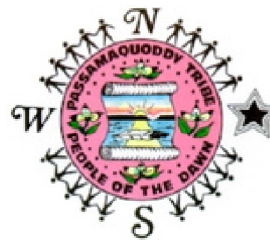
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THE WABANAKI

Today, there are five Wabanaki communities in Maine, each with its own tribal government and elected officials. Maine has a unique relationship with the tribes, which are isolated from federal Native policy due to a settlement over land disputes with the state in 1980. The Abbe Museum enjoys a close relationship with each of the tribes and provides a venue for authentic Native voices in our exhibits, publications, and public programs.



Pictured: Map of Wabanaki reservations/tribal headquarters



Wabanaki Community Emblems (from left to right): Houlton Band of Maliseet; Mi'kmaq Nation; Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkokmikuk; Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik; Penobscot Nation



THE WABANAKI (CONTINUED)

We have archaeological evidence of people living in Maine for the last 12,000 years, primarily as hunters and gatherers, with some farming practiced in southern Maine. Native people thrived on a rich diet of fish, shellfish, other marine resources, and game and wild plants. They traveled Maine's coast, rivers, and lakes by canoe and traded with people as far away as Labrador and Pennsylvania. Evidence of leisure, such as bird bone flutes, rattles, delicate shell beads, and decorated pottery, indicate that life in Maine was good.

In the mid-1500s, European settlers started arriving in the region, initially for fishing, but later, in larger numbers, they came to settle. Their arrival had a significant impact on Native communities, introducing new materials for trade and diseases that killed over 90% of the population in some areas and influenced changes in subsistence patterns.



Pictured: Wabanaki petroglyphs



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THE WABANAKI (CONTINUED)

With the advent of the United States, tourism to Maine, specifically to Mount Desert Island, increased, and Wabanaki people, having always lived on the Island, began to alter traditional patterns. To appeal to the tourist market, Wabanaki people traveled to the larger towns on the Island, such as Bar Harbor and Southwest Harbor, during the summer season to sell baskets and beadwork and serve as hunting and fishing guides.



Pictured: Wabanaki encampment in Bar Harbor, Maine



Pictured: Penobscot guide, Frank "Big Thunder" Lolar

The Wabanaki Tribes of Maine

Today, there are four federally recognized tribes in Maine: Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot.

Each community maintains its own tribal government, community schools and cultural centers, and manages tribal lands and natural resources.

Maliseet, Houlton

The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians received U.S. federal recognition in 1980. Since then, they have built a tribal center on their lands along the Meduxnekeag River near Houlton.

Many Maliseets refer themselves as Wolastoqiyik, "The People of the Saint John River."

Penobscot, Indian Island

The Penobscot Nation has their main reservation at Indian Island, in the Penobscot River near Old Town. The name Penobscot comes from panahpskek, "place of the white rocks," or "where the rocks widen."

In the 2020 census for Maine, 9,537 people identified themselves as American Indian or Alaskan Native, representing 0.7% of the state's total population of 1,362,359.

Mi'kmaq, Presque Isle

The Mi'kmaq Nation finally received federal recognition in 1991 after a long process of research and petition to the U.S. federal government. The translation of the word's derivation is uncertain: possibly "our kin" or "people of the red Earth."

Passamaquoddy, Pleasant Point and Indian Township

The Passamaquoddy Tribe has two ATL reservations in Washington County: Sipayik at Pleasant Point and Motahkomikuk, 50 miles inland at Indian Township. The name Passamaquoddy comes from peskotomuhkatik, meaning "people of the pollock-spearing place."

