

Pennacook, Winnipesaukee, Abenaki, Wabanaki, and Acadian Heritage of New England

Union of Saints

The Indigenous and Acadian Peoples of the Region

The history of northern New England is connected through Indigenous peoples, Acadian settlement, migration, colonial conflict, displacement, and generations of rebuilding. The **Pennacook, Winnipesaukee, Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, and other Wabanaki peoples** belonged to a larger Eastern Algonquian cultural and linguistic world, while the **Acadians** developed as a distinct French speaking people in Mi'kma'ki and Acadia.

These histories intersected over centuries through trade, diplomacy, settlement, family relationships, warfare, resistance, migration, and shared experiences of colonial expansion.

The Pennacook

The **Pennacook** were an Indigenous Algonquian people whose homeland centered on the Merrimack River Valley, including much of present day New Hampshire and neighboring portions of New England.

Pennacook communities included settlements along the Merrimack River, including **Pennacook**, in present day Concord, and **Amoskeag**, at present day Manchester.

Under leaders including **Passaconaway**, Pennacook communities participated in a larger political network sometimes described as the Pennacook Confederacy.

Historical sources describe this territory as extending through the Merrimack and Connecticut River valleys and northward toward **Lake Winnipesaukee**.

Lake Winnipesaukee and the Winnipesaukee People

Lake Winnipesaukee preserves an important Indigenous place name in central New Hampshire.

The name has appeared in numerous historical spellings, including **Winnipiseogee** and Winnipesaukee. It is generally associated with an Abenaki form, although interpretations of its precise meaning have varied over time.

The **Winnepesaukee people** were an Indigenous community associated with the lake. Their important fishing location at **Acquadocton**, at present day The Weirs, used fishing weirs that ultimately gave the English place its name.

The Winnepesaukee people are therefore an important part of the Indigenous history of central New Hampshire and its connection to the larger Pennacook and Abenaki region.

The Abenaki and Wabanaki Connection

The Pennacook and Winnepesaukee peoples were closely connected to the broader **Abenaki and Eastern Algonquian world**.

The term **Wabanaki** refers to a larger Indigenous cultural and political world of the northeastern Dawn Land. The historic Wabanaki Confederacy is generally associated with the **Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik / Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot** peoples.

The Pennacook were closely related to these peoples, although historians differ regarding whether the Pennacook should specifically be classified as one of the original members of the historic Wabanaki Confederacy.

A careful description is therefore that the Pennacook belonged to the **Eastern Algonquian and Wabanaki cultural world while maintaining their own Pennacook identity**.

The Mi'kmaq

The **Mi'kmaq** are one of the major peoples of the Wabanaki world. Their traditional homeland, **Mi'kma'ki**, encompasses much of present day Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and parts of the Gaspé Peninsula.

The Mi'kmaq and Pennacook were related Eastern Algonquian peoples, but they were distinct communities with their own territories, political structures, and histories.

The historical relationship between the Mi'kmaq and Acadians is especially significant. Acadian communities developed within **Mi'kma'ki**, and Parks Canada describes longstanding relationships between Acadians and Mi'kmaq communities during the colonial period.

The Acadians

Acadia and Mi'kma'ki

The **Acadians** developed as a distinct French speaking population in Acadia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

French settlers established communities within **Mi'kma'ki**, the traditional homeland of the Mi'kmaq. Acadian settlements developed at places including **Port Royal, Grand-Pré, Pisiquid, Beaubassin, Cobequid, and the Annapolis Basin.**

Acadian society developed its own agricultural practices, communities, family networks, cultural traditions, and regional identity. At Grand-Pré and elsewhere, Acadian farmers transformed salt marshes into productive agricultural land through extensive dyke systems.

The Acadians were therefore not simply Europeans living separately from the Indigenous history of the region. Their history developed **within a landscape that was already the homeland of the Mi'kmaq**, and Acadian communities maintained relationships with Mi'kmaq communities.

The Acadian Deportation and Grand Dérangement

Beginning in **1755**, British authorities initiated the forced deportation of Acadians from Nova Scotia.

The deportation became known as the **Grand Dérangement**, or Great Upheaval. Parks Canada records that approximately **10,000 Acadians were forcibly removed between 1755 and 1762**, while thousands more escaped deportation and fled toward areas including present day New Brunswick, Québec, and Prince Edward Island.

At Grand-Pré alone, approximately **2,200 Acadian men, women, and children** were deported in 1755.

The deportation separated families, destroyed communities, and scattered Acadian people throughout the British colonies, Québec, France, Louisiana, and other parts of the Atlantic world.

This created an enduring **Acadian diaspora**.

The Acadians Aboard the Pembroke

December 1755

One of the most remarkable stories of Acadian resistance occurred aboard the **Pembroke**.

In December 1755, approximately **232 Acadians from the Annapolis Royal region** were placed aboard the Pembroke, a vessel intended to transport them to **North Carolina**.

The people aboard the ship included men, women, and children who had been forcibly removed from their homes during the Great Upheaval. They were being

transported away from their homeland as part of the wider British deportation of the Acadian population.

Instead of accepting exile, the Acadians aboard the Pembroke **took control of the vessel**.

They managed to overpower the crew and redirect the ship northward. Rather than continuing toward the British colonies, they sailed toward the **Saint John River**, returning toward the Acadian and Wabanaki region.

Parks Canada records that **all 232 people escaped**. Most eventually made their way to Québec, while others returned to the Annapolis region and lived in hiding.

The story is especially significant because it represents an act of resistance during a period when Acadian families were being forcibly scattered throughout the Atlantic colonies.

The Pembroke and the Saint John River

The Saint John River became an important refuge and corridor for Acadians escaping the deportation.

The Acadians who reached the river were entering a region connected to the **Wolastoqiyik / Maliseet and broader Wabanaki world**. Some Acadian communities survived in the region by taking refuge, moving through the forests and river systems, and maintaining relationships with Indigenous communities.

Parks Canada describes Acadian and Mi'kmaq resistance during this period and documents cooperation between Acadian resistance groups and Mi'kmaq and other Wabanaki peoples.

The Pembroke therefore represents more than an individual escape. It forms part of a larger history of **Acadian survival within the Wabanaki region**.

Acadian and Wabanaki Resistance

The relationship between Acadians and Wabanaki peoples continued during the period of British expansion.

Acadian resistance leaders such as **Joseph Broussard dit Beausoleil** participated in resistance alongside Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and other Wabanaki allies. Parks Canada recognizes Broussard as an important leader of Acadian resistance during and after the 1755 deportation.

These relationships demonstrate that the history of the Acadian Deportation cannot be separated entirely from the broader Indigenous history of the region.

Both Indigenous peoples and Acadians experienced major transformations as European imperial powers competed for control of northeastern North America.

Their histories were different, but they intersected.

Diaspora and Survival

The Grand Dérangement produced an Acadian diaspora that extended across North America and beyond.

Some Acadians escaped to Québec. Others remained in or returned to the Maritime region. Others eventually settled in **Louisiana**, where their descendants became associated with the Cajun identity.

Some Acadians returned to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick after the Seven Years' War, but many were unable to reclaim their original farms. Parks Canada notes that New England settlers had occupied many of the former Acadian lands during the years of exile.

The Acadian story therefore includes both **displacement and rebuilding**.

The people survived the destruction of their communities and rebuilt Acadian communities in new locations.

New England and the Acadian Story

The history of Acadia is also connected to New England.

New England soldiers and colonial governments participated in the British military campaigns and deportation of Acadians. At the same time, Acadian refugees and descendants later lived throughout New England and maintained family, cultural, religious, and economic relationships across the region.

The result is a complicated regional history in which **New England, Acadia, Mi'kma'ki, and the Wabanaki homeland cannot be understood entirely as separate historical worlds**.

The same rivers, coastlines, families, communities, and migration routes connected them.

A Shared Regional History

The history of this region can therefore be understood through several interconnected peoples and histories:

Wabanaki

Abenaki

Pennacook

Winnepesaukee

Mi'kmaq

Wolastoqiyik / Maliseet

Passamaquoddy

Penobscot

Acadian

These identities should not be collapsed into one another. Each people has its own history and identity.

At the same time, their histories intersect through geography, diplomacy, trade, family relationships, colonial warfare, resistance, migration, and survival.

The **Pennacook and Winnepesaukee story** helps explain the Indigenous history of New Hampshire.

The **Wabanaki and Mi'kmaq story** connects New Hampshire to the larger Indigenous world of the northeastern Dawn Land.

The **Acadian story** connects that same region to French settlement, Mi'kma'ki, the Grand Dérangement, the Pembroke escape, and the wider Acadian diaspora.

Together, these histories help explain why the northeastern region contains such a complicated heritage of **Indigenous continuity, French Acadian settlement, colonial conflict, displacement, diaspora, and resilience.**

Regional Respect and Boundaries

Our Union does not support modern colonialism, forced mass instrumentalization, the creation of new tribes in place of historically documented Indigenous communities, or campaigns and institutions that seek to redefine the identity of this region without respect for its existing historical peoples and communities, including campaigns such as “Welcoming America” or the establishment of “Offices of New Americans” in the region.

Our position is grounded in respect for the historical communities of this region and in recognition that colonialism, settlement, displacement, assimilation, and diaspora are direct parts of the history that formed the people and communities who remain here today.

Our people are a resilient people. However, that resilience exists alongside a dark history of diaspora, displacement, and loss. The Acadian Grand Dérangement is one particularly important example of how families were forcibly removed from

their homes, scattered throughout North America, and forced to rebuild their communities elsewhere.

The story of the Acadians aboard the Pembroke also demonstrates that diaspora was not simply passive movement. The 232 Acadians aboard that vessel resisted their forced removal, took control of the ship, and escaped to the Saint John River. Their story is part of the larger history of Acadian survival and resilience within the Wabanaki region.

We ask that our regional boundaries, historical identity, Indigenous heritage, Acadian heritage, and the communities that have developed here through generations of history be respected.

The spirit of the community can be felt by all who travel through.

Please respect our land. Please respect our history. Please respect our people who have endured the wars of this region and who have built the beautiful communities seen alongside nature today.