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# Native Land Use and Settlements in the Northeastern Woodlands

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# Native Land Use and Settlements in the Northeastern Woodlands

## **Abstract**

The lives of Native peoples in the Northeast were threatened, not only by European plagues and warfare, but by the European desire for land. European peoples, in general, treated land as an inanimate commodity to be transferred and manipulated at will by human owners. Native peoples, in contrast, viewed the landscape as animate, communal territory, supporting both human and non-human inhabitants in reciprocal social and spiritual relationships. For Europeans, the region was a "new world;" to Native peoples, it was ancient, familiar territory. Native peoples in the Northeast had developed intimate relationships with the landscape, adapting to various changes in climate while traveling, building homes, hunting, fishing, foraging, and planting. The various sites that made up familiar landscapes for each of the different Native Nations are best described as "homelands."

## **Keywords**

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## **Disciplines**

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# Native Land Use and Settlements in the Northeastern Woodlands - By Marge Bruchac

## Introduction

The lives of Native peoples in the Northeast were threatened, not only by European plagues and warfare, but by the European desire for land. European peoples, in general, treated land as an inanimate commodity to be transferred and manipulated at will by human owners. Native peoples, in contrast, viewed the landscape as animate, communal territory, supporting both human and non-human inhabitants in reciprocal social and spiritual relationships. For Europeans, the region was a "new world;" to Native peoples, it was ancient, familiar territory. Native peoples in the Northeast had developed intimate relationships with the landscape, adapting to various changes in climate while traveling, building homes, hunting, fishing, foraging, and planting. The various sites that made up familiar landscapes for each of the different Native Nations are best described as "homelands." [\(1\)](#)

The Northeast was not inhabited by one homogenous people. By the time the first European colonists arrived in the late 1500s, the two largest Native groups – [Algonkian](#) and [Iroquoian](#) peoples – had been at war over adjoining territorial and political boundaries for some time. There has been considerable debate about when Iroquoian peoples arrived in the northeast, given that they are so different, linguistically and culturally, from Algonkian peoples. Oral traditions and archaeological records suggest that Algonkian peoples have been living in the northeast for at least 12,000 years, since the retreat of the last glaciers. Iroquoian peoples are generally believed to have begun moving north from mound-builder societies at some point about 3,500 years in the past, during a time of intense inter-tribal warfare, settling into their present-day locations between 700 and 900 C.E. [\(Current Era\)](#). For at least 1,300 years, Iroquoian and Algonkian peoples have been, variously, neighbors, enemies, allies and/or trading partners. [\(2\)](#)

The Algonkian peoples inhabited all of what is now New England, most of Canada and the Maritimes, and the easternmost part of New York state. The term Algonkian includes the [Connecticut River valley](#) peoples ([Aqawam](#), [Cowass](#), [Pocumtuck](#), [Nonotuck](#), [Quaboag](#), [Quinnipiac](#), [Woronoco](#) and [Sokoki](#)), Hudson River valley peoples ([Mohican](#), [Munsee](#) and [Wappinger](#)), and several different Native Nations in southern New England – [Mohegan](#), [Montauk](#), [Narragansett](#), [Nipmuc](#), [Paugusset](#), [Pequot](#), [Schaghticoke](#), and [Wampanoag](#), among others. These different Algonkian groups formed various inter-tribal alliances and confederacies and made use of sometimes overlapping homelands. One of the largest formal alliances among the northeastern Algonkian peoples was the "Wabanaki Confederacy," which included the [Abenaki](#), [Maliseet](#), [Mi'kmaq](#), [Passamaquoddy](#), and [Penobscot](#). [\(3\)](#)

The Iroquois came to inhabit most of present-day New York, Pennsylvania, the southern parts of Canada and part of the St. Lawrence Seaway. At some point after their arrival in this region, five of the Iroquois nations – the [Kanienkehaka](#) (Mohawk), [Oneida](#), [Onondaga](#), [Cayuga](#) and [Seneca](#) joined together in a formal confederacy. Oral traditions recount that the founding of the [Rotinonsionni](#) or Haudenosaunee ("people of the longhouse") Confederacy or [Iroquois League](#) was designed to end inter-tribal warfare among its members. These traditions are supported by the archaeological evidence of violent death, the movement of villages to defensive sites, and the construction of palisades during the same time period. [\(4\)](#) The Iroquois League did not, however, stop making war on other Native peoples. For centuries, the Kanienkehaka were engaged in fighting with both Mohican peoples in the Hudson River valley, and Wóbanaki (Abenaki) peoples in the Lake Champlain valley and upstate New York. During the 1640s, the Five Nations conquered another Iroquoian-speaking group – the [Wendat](#) (Huron) Confederacy living at the northern end of present-day Lake Huron. [\(5\)](#)

## Algonkian Homelands

Algonkian territory is large and diverse, encompassing many Native Nations who share similar languages and cultures while living in very different geographies and ecosystems. The broad cultural term "Algonkian" includes island dwellers in southern New England, such as the [Montauk](#) of present-day Long Island, and the Wampanoag peoples of Aquinnah (Martha's Vineyard); sea-faring coastal peoples like the Penobscot and Mi'kmaq of present-day Maine and the Maritimes; inland hunting communities like the Abenaki of Vermont; and even the Native Nations around the Great Lakes. Many of the Algonkian Nations of present-day New England were situated along large tidal rivers like the Merrimac, Thames, Connecticut, and Hudson, which provided easy travel to inland communities and a steady supply of anadromous fish such as shad and salmon.

Politically, Algonkian communities were organized around families, extended kin groups, bands, and tribes or Nations.



Many Algonkian people living along water ways relied on tools, like this fishing spear.

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Socially, the smallest unit of organization was the family band, a group that maintained an attachment, not to one fixed dwelling place, but to a range of resource-gathering sites within a broad homeland. Extensive inter-tribal, cross-kin networks existed that facilitated trade, travel, intermarriage and alliances among the various Nations of Algonkian peoples. Although there were many different political alliances, there was not one over-arching formal alliance that governed all the culturally related or geographically adjacent Nations. Algonkian peoples were able to maintain a great degree of personal freedom and family autonomy as they circulated within their homelands. [\(6\)](#)

Resources in Algonkian homelands, given the ecological diversity of riverine, marine, forest, meadow, and other environments, were abundant. People circulated through their homelands in a seasonal round, and also traded with their Native neighbors for exotic or unusual resources. Forests supplied wood, bark, and roots for firewood and building materials. Trees and other indigenous flora provided sap, nuts, berries, twigs, roots and greens that were used for food and medicine. Skilled individuals, families, and societies controlled the dissemination of skills, tools, instruments, weapons, medicines, and knowledges, and also monitored access to certain territories. Over time, different Native Nations developed and transmitted highly sophisticated bodies of knowledge of every aspect of the local landscape and all the flora and fauna within it. These knowledges are still embedded in traditional stories and languages used to describe and discuss the natural world. [\(7\)](#)

Each part of Algonkian territory in the northeast, even today, contains specific well-known sacred sites, hunting territories, burial places, fishing places, planting fields and homesites. Algonkian Indian peoples moved about their homelands frequently, setting up clusters of wigwams at different seasons of the year, catching migrating fish in the spring, gathering in marshes and meadows during the summer months, and hunting game in the fall and winter. This shifting of Algonkian homes, and use of a wide range of different resource-gathering sites, contributed to the mistaken perception, among European colonists, that Algonkian peoples were wandering nomads who had no permanent dwelling places. In fact, Algonkian peoples were deeply rooted in, and deeply attached to, all of the sites within their homeland. [\(8\)](#)

The Algonkian sense of connection to the land was, philosophically, one of relationship, more than outright possession. Linguistically, and spiritually, the land itself and many of the formations upon it, including rocks and mountains, were regarded as imbued with life and spirit, rather than seemingly inanimate rock and dirt. Each Algonkian group had traditional stories that related the actions of ancient earthshapers and mythical beings in the landscape, and various trails, stone piles, rocks, and place-names were used as memory markers to relate these traditions. [\(9\)](#) Non-human beings were considered to be both relatives and ancestors; Wóbanaki traditions, for example, include an origin story in which human beings were created out of the ash tree, a being that most European traditions consider to be inanimate. [\(10\)](#)

The spiritual relationship to the land and other creatures does not mean that there was no sense of ownership or stewardship. Societies and clans maintained detailed knowledge of various skills and traditions, mapped the locations of particular natural resources, and monitored populations of flora and fauna. Families managed individual or group planting fields, and individual clans, hunters, kin groups or tribal nations acted as stewards for hunting and foraging regions. Natural resources were not just passively foraged; they were actively managed, through such practices as regular burning to clear deadwood, produce pasture, and encourage the growth of nut trees and fresh browse. [\(11\)](#) Communal areas, like the large falls where annual fish runs were held, and many sacred places within Algonkian territory, were shared among several different Native nations, and the trails that led to these places were often considered safe zones to be used by all.

Maize, or corn, was a relatively new addition to the ancient diet of Algonkian peoples, arriving in the northeast about 1200 C.E. Algonkian river valleys were filled with rich alluvial soil, and Algonkian peoples had started growing maize in the fields beside these rivers. Typically, these cornfields were cleared, broken up and planted by all members of a community during the spring, under the guidance of the women. The fields were then left, either to themselves, or with only a few families to tend them, while other tribal members continued moving to other sites during the seasonal rounds. In coastal communities, Algonkian peoples made use of the annual fish runs of shad and herring to fertilize their corn fields. [\(12\)](#)

Long-standing inter-tribal agreements, flexible alliances, and a strong sense of personal and tribal responsibility and honor, governed which families and tribes inhabited particular parts of a homeland, how and when resources were harvested, how Nations would cooperate, and where people could seek refuge or alliance in times of war. Specific regional customs and practices, such as the communal fish harvesting at [Peskeompskut](#) (now Turner's Falls); the songs and dances performed at Wabanaki Confederacy greeting ceremonies; the preparation of food at Narragansett

Nikkomoh feasts; and a host of other seasonal activities, combined with both formal and informal thanks-giving and gift-giving, all reinforced the commonality of spiritual traditions, and the diversity of regional practices, in Algonkian homelands. [\(13\)](#)

Despite the obvious presence of Algonkian peoples, European explorers and traders chose to believe that Algonkian homelands were an uninhabited, unknown "wilderness," awaiting colonization and settlement by Christian Europeans. During the late 16th and early 17th centuries, after several waves of European sicknesses swept through Algonkian populations, many villages, homesites and cornfields were temporarily if not permanently abandoned. In the wake of this devastation, Native lands in coastal regions and along tidal rivers were among the first to be claimed and colonized by Europeans. In response, Native leaders began to form new inter-tribal alliances, and developed a variety of strategies for hanging onto their homelands, including selective accomodation, active international diplomacy, forcible resistance, relocation, and outright warfare. [\(14\)](#)

## Iroquoian Homelands

Iroquoian use of homelands was, in general, more settled, and less wide-ranging, with a stronger sense of fixed, permanent boundaries between different cultural groups. Iroquoian spiritual traditions and political organization were mapped onto fixed locations in the physical landscape, and each Nation was responsible for caring for all living beings, including the land itself, within those boundaries. Metaphorically, the founders of the Five Nations (later Six Nations) [Iroquois Confederacy](#) spoke of the people as all agreeing to live under the rafters of one great "longhouse," with individual nations responsible for guarding the "doors." Each nation held its own "council fire," those situated at the center hosted communal "council fires" for the entire confederacy. [\(15\)](#)

Before the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy, warfare was apparently widespread; after the confederacy, both oral and archaeological records testify to more structured, peaceful relationships among the Five Nations. The records of Iroquois occupation of New York, Pennsylvania, and parts of the St. Lawrence valley show that they practiced a sedentary style of farming, using the same large fields and same homesites continuously for many years. They constructed large villages, with multi-family longhouses, often situated inside a stockade. The longhouses and stockades were surrounded by fields of maize, beans and squash, the "Three Sisters" plants that provided the bulk of their diet. Medicinal plants such as tobacco were also cultivated in longhouse gardens. [\(16\)](#) Parties of Iroquoian peoples went out to fish, gather and hunt in various parts of the homelands, but most of the community lived in the village year-round.



Native peoples used mortars such as this to grind corn into meal for use in various recipes.

Courtesy Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA.

The land on which each Iroquois village was situated was communally owned, but the cornfields were individually owned by the women who planted and tended them. When cornfields lost their fertility or wood and game became scarce, every decade or so, both longhouses and cornfields would move to a new location. The structure of Iroquois society was reflected in the layout of villages on the landscape, even in new locations. [\(17\)](#)

There were also, in the past, strict distinctions between male and female roles and activities. Iroquois communities were organized by [clans](#) — different Clan Mothers owned each of the multi-family lodges, and took full responsibility for all the families within that lodge, who were of the same clan. Men moved in with their wives' families, and children were assigned to the same clan as their mother, with the same territorial rights. Thus, the Iroquois were both matrilineal (descent was traced through the female line) and matrilocal (husbands lived in their wife's family territory). Oral traditions reinforced spiritual beliefs that Native peoples were related to specific clan animals, and those clan relationships influenced personal characteristics and abilities and guided hunting behaviors. [\(18\)](#)

Specific oral traditions and cultural practices guided preparations for domestic activities on the land within the village, and hunting, trade, and warlike activities on the lands outside of the villages. Religious gatherings, within individual villages or at large council meetings, always included some form of "thanksgiving address" in which elders and leaders would formally give thanks to each of the beings that supported human life, including the land itself. [\(19\)](#)

The political and spiritual leaders of the different Nations within the Iroquois Confederacy met regularly, and cooperated with each other against common enemies. Some regions within Iroquoia were exclusively used or managed by certain clans or kin groups, but some sacred places were shared among all of the Nations. Iroquoian peoples conducted extensive trade with other Nations within the Confederacy and, during times of peace, with their Algonkian neighbors.

## English Deeds and Native Lands

At first contact, Algonkian land in the northeast appeared uninhabited to English and French people who had little or no understanding of the ways in which Native peoples manipulated and used the landscape. Yet the earliest European settlers took full advantage of Algonkian improvements, by using well-worn Indian trails, and settling in locations where Native peoples had already cleared the land by burning or farming. They commented on the park-like nature of fields and forest that had been cleared and quickly adapted to planting and growing Native foods, particularly corn, beans, and squash, to supplement or replace English crops. The emphasis on farming meant that, to English eyes, only those fields that were actively being cultivated and planted were legally possessed by Indians. Since these were often the most desirable lands, the English began to negotiate deeds of sale for their occupation. In the Connecticut River valley, fur trader and land speculator William Pynchon recognized that the English government had no leverage over Native peoples "until you have bought their land: until this be done they must be esteemed as an Independant free people." (20)

Contrary to English expectations, Native peoples rarely fully vacated the lands that they deeded. Many Native leaders apparently interpreted these deeds as treaty agreements for shared use, and there were also errors, intentional or accidental, in translation. The Nonotuck sachem Umpanchela, for example, negotiated a deed that clearly required John Pynchon to plow the Indians' cornfields. (21) The deed that Chauk signed for Pocumtuck retained apparently permanent "Liberty of fishing for ye Indians in ye Rivers or waters & free Liberty to hunt deere or other wild creatures, & to gather walnuts chestnuts & other nuts things &c on ye Commons." (22) Regardless of these supposed agreements, English colonial leaders interpreted all Indian deeds as quit-claims, and tensions increased between Native peoples and Euro-American settlers when Indians refused to leave.



In this deed to 8000 acres of the Pocumtuck homeland, Chauk explicitly retained rights for his people to use their homelands. Click [here](#) for more information.

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allow travel across territories, all helped to balance inter-tribal relationships, even during times of extreme warfare between Iroquoian and Algonkian peoples. (23)



Wampum was central to many Native rituals in the northeast.

Courtesy of Historic Northampton.

and demanded wampum tribute from Algonkian tribes who wished to follow the trails to Albany to trade with the Dutch. They even prevented other Nations in the Iroquois League from coming to Fort Orange. (25)

## Northeastern Native Leadership and Land

Symbolically, control of the territory that constituted a tribal homeland could be vested in traditional Native leaders, called chiefs, or sachems, and these leaders organized group resistance against enemies who trespassed on Native lands. When Native Nations were at war with one another, they generally fought to gain political control, personal power, or vengeance rather than to claim outright ownership of another tribe's territory. Ideally, losers would be put in a position where they would be forced to support the winners by paying tribute or supplying food and resources. Ritualized warfare, trading networks, inter-tribal marriages, ritual transfers of various goods or prisoners, and the various accommodations made to

After European colonists appeared, however, the balance changed. Plagues and warfare disrupted seasonal activities and destabilized tribal politics. Some Native leaders began to claim exclusive ownership of what was once shared land, and they fixed new boundaries in order to either negotiate alliances or to keep European colonists out. Competition among different groups for the fur trade also increased tribal rivalries and inter-tribal warfare. (24) The Kanienkehaka Mohawk of the Iroquois Confederacy, for example, had been in a power struggle with the various Nations of Mohican peoples in the Hudson River valley for decades by the time the Dutch arrived in 1609. With the help of Dutch guns, the Kanienkehaka defeated the Mohican and forced them to become subservient to the Iroquois Confederacy. Once the Kanienkahaka had secured control over trade with the Dutch at Fort Orange (Albany), they refused to allow the Dutch to travel inland, and demanded wampum tribute from Algonkian tribes who wished to follow the trails to Albany to trade with the Dutch. They even prevented other Nations in the Iroquois League from coming to Fort Orange. (25)

The presence of common enemies eventually inspired Algonkian and Iroquoian peoples to join forces. During the late 1600s, the Kanienkehaka at Kahnawake sought peace with Wabanaki Confederacy and other Native Nations living in present-day Canada, including the [Nipissing](#) and [Algonquin](#), through an alliance that was generally called the "[Seven Nations](#)" or "[Seven Fires](#)." This alliance helped to lay the foundation for the "[Great Peace](#)" of 1701. [\(26\)](#)

## Shifting Algonkian Villages in New England

By the late 17th century, a number of closely related peoples in northern New England started shifting locations to resist European invasion of traditional homelands in present-day Vermont and New Hampshire. Some of these same peoples joined with the French, and temporarily or permanently relocated to northern villages associated with Catholic missions. They began to be called, by the English, "French Indians," "St. Francis Abenaki," and eventually "Western Abenaki," none of which are precisely correct. The closely related Native tribes of present-day Vermont, New Hampshire, and southern Quebec are often collectively referred to as Abenaki, Western Abenaki, or St. Francis Abenaki. These peoples include the [Missisquoi](#), Cowass and Sokoki of Vermont, the Pennacook, Pequawket and Pawtucket of New Hampshire, and the St. Francis and Wolinak of Quebec, among others. For the purposes of this website, we have grouped these peoples under the broad name of "Wôbanakiak," along with their close linguistic neighbors and allies, the Pocumtuck, Nonotuck, Agawam and Woronoco of the Connecticut River valley in Massachusetts. [\(27\)](#)

During the 1660s, a number of central and southern New England Algonkian peoples had formed "praying villages" of Christianized Indians in Nipmuc, Massachusetts, and Pawtucket/Pennacook communities. Under the guidance of the English minister John Eliot, these Native peoples organized house lots, gardens, and fields on the English model, with private family plots and town commons for grazing, and, for the most part, gave up seasonal travel. During King Philip's War, many of these peoples were removed to internment camps on Deer Island or killed, and their land was claimed by English settlers. [\(28\)](#) The present-day Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuc community around Dudley/Webster is connected to one of the 17th century praying villages. [\(29\)](#)

During the early 19th century, several Native communities in southern New England, including Mashpee Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Mohegan, founded new Congregational churches on tribal lands, where Native peoples were able to combine traditional practices with Christianity. These churches, situated at locations that have been sacred since pre-contact times, are still operating today, and continue to serve as central gathering places for traditional celebrations in their respective communities. [\(30\)](#)

## Iroquois and Algonkian Missions in New France

During the late 1600s and early 1700s, a series of new villages were founded at [Kahnawake](#), [La Montagne](#), [Lorette](#), [Odanak](#) and elsewhere in southern Canada and along the St. Lawrence. Most of these villages included Catholic missions, and were placed on land granted by the French government to either the [Jesuits](#) or [Sulpicians](#) as [seigneuries](#).

Although the land was already well-known to Native peoples, and in some cases, already a part of their traditional homelands, the right to inhabit it required negotiations with both French and Native interests. Wôbanaki oral traditions indicate that, during the late 1600s, the New England tribes had arranged to share the hunting territories of the [Algonkin](#) peoples who were living along the St. Lawrence river. Under French dominion, however, the land where the Wôbanaki village of Odanak settled, originally known as [Arosekantegouk](#), was now considered to be owned by the French as part of the seigneurie of the Crevier family. Both the Kanienkehaka village of Kahnawake and the Wôbanaki village of Odanak went through several relocations before reaching the sites where they stand today. When croplands began to lose their fertility, or when the French government wanted their land, Native villages were forced to move. [\(31\)](#)

After groups of Algonkian and Iroquoian peoples had moved from their original homelands into these villages, their lifeways began to merge with each other and with French beliefs and customs. Iroquoian, Wendat, and Wôbanaki families mixed Native and European lifestyles, building and living in wooden frame houses and bark longhouses side by side. Iroquoian and Algonkian individuals who shared French Catholicism began to intermarry, and some villages took on a mixed inter-tribal character. Iroquoian peoples seem to have easily transplanted longhouse living north to the St. Lawrence. Algonkian peoples who moved north had to modify their seasonal travel patterns to adapt to permanent homesites, less foraging and more hunting for commercial interests.

Gender roles also began to shift in Christian Indian villages in ways that mirrored the dominant French or English society around them. Women who hunted, gambled, or practiced traditional religions might be criticized by both the priests and their Christianized neighbors. French and English traders both preferred to negotiate with male hunters, recruited Native men as soldiers, and groomed male leaders, regardless of the advice or influence of female relatives, clan leaders or societies. Many Native women began to stay in the villages year-round, tending both gardens and domestic animals, while the men departed at various times of the year to hunt, trap and carry out warfare. Over time, Native men in these mission communities, regardless of their tribal background, began to develop patriarchal relationships and leadership roles, and claim European-style ownership of land and hunting territories. [\(32\)](#)



By 1700, the Wendat at Lorette integrated traditional practices with European customs.  
Copyright Frank Gregory.

Life in New France required a number of choices about religious practices and lifeways. The Jesuit and Sulpician missions encouraged the incorporation of some Native customs in the churches. Prayers and songs were translated into Native languages, and traditional Native offerings, like corn and wampum, were included in the Mass. More Native women than men joined the church, perhaps as a strategy to consolidate power and stabilize their families. The missionaries desired Native peoples to live permanently within the bounds of a European village or fort, but colonial warfare, inter-tribal politics, band relationships, and religious differences caused frequent movements of various tribes, extended families and kin groups into and out of the northern missions. (33)

## Native Presence and Persistence

During the late 17th and early 18th century, the periodic return of Native peoples from northern villages to traditional homelands in the middle Connecticut River valley became cause for increased suspicion among European settlers. In the aftermath of both Metacom's (King Philip's) War and the American Revolution, large tracts of Native land were officially deeded over to white American veterans. Native communities in southern New England became confined on ever diminishing tracts of land surrounded by English towns. Native peoples in northern New England found themselves targeted by scalp hunters when colonial governments started paying high bounties. The populations of both Algonkian and Iroquoian villages in Canada fluctuated wildly as refugees moved in and out.

Some Wōbanakiak, like the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy in Maine, settled on reservations, but continued to hunt and fish in the expansive forests and rivers. Some Wōbanaki peoples in present-day Vermont and New Hampshire, including the Pennacook, Sokoki, and Missisquoi Abenaki, deeded, or in some cases, leased, small portions of their traditional homelands to English settlers, but never permanently moved away. (34) A number of Wōbanaki and other Algonkian Indian families continued to circulate through their homelands, combining modern life, settled jobs, and fixed places of residence, with subsistence hunting and fishing, marketing Native basketry, and working as guides for Anglo-American hunters. Some former Connecticut River valley peoples who moved to Canada eventually found themselves cut off from their original territory, after the Euro-American political boundary between the United States and Canada artificially split the Wōbanaki homelands. (35)

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, many of the Iroquoian peoples in New York State, who had remained loyal to the British, were pressured to move to Canada. Some bands of the Onondaga, Seneca, Cayuga and Oneida remained in New York, and have since gained federal recognition and reclaimed large tracts of land, while others are in current negotiations to claim more land. Some bands of the Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy ended up, through a series of removals, living as far away as Oklahoma and Wisconsin. At one Kanienkehaka community, Kanatsiohareke, a group returned from the St. Lawrence River in the 1980s to reclaim a plot of traditional territory on the Mohawk River in central New York state not far from an original pre-contact Kanienkehaka village site named Kahnawake (Caughnawaga). (36) The basic structure of Rotinsonionni/Iroquois political and social organization still persists today, alongside Euro-American political models.

Despite the widespread impression that the Algonkian peoples of the northeast have vanished, a large number of these tribes still inhabit a part of their original homelands today. During the early 20th century, many of the Native Nations of New England emerged from years of political and social isolation, and the burdens of American prejudice, to publicly reassert their tribal identities. (37) In New England Algonkian territory, the list of surviving Native Nations, which is by no means conclusive, includes Aroostook Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Missisquoi Abenaki, Mohegan, Narragansett, two bands of Nipmuc (Chaubunagungamaug and Hassanamisco/Nipmuc Nation), Passamaquoddy, Paugusset, Penobscot, three bands of Pequot (Mashantucket, Eastern and Pawcatuck), Schaghticoke, and three bands of Wampanoag (Assonet, Aquinnah and Mashpee), among others.

Overall, the ability to maintain Native skills and beliefs, while selectively adapting Euro-American lifeways, helped Algonkian and Iroquoian peoples and communities to survive into the 21st century. In general, the process of establishing federal recognition, and the acknowledgement of tribal ownership of original tribal homelands, has favored groups, like the Iroquois, who practiced sedentary lifeways and hierarchical political structures in ways that mirrored Euro-American land ownership and political organization. The inherent flexibility and fluidity of Algonkian lifeways

enabled isolated Algonkian families and kin groups to survive, but Americans still tend to view seasonal activities and loose political structures as signs of impermanence. Algonkian groups such as the Mohegan, who established churches or settled down on reservation lands have, by and large, gained federal recognition; those who continued to practice traditional lifeways, such as the Missisquoi Abenaki, have not. Even so, after all of the relocations and removals, northeastern Native peoples, both Iroquois and Algonkian, have retained the memory of, and spiritual attachment to, their original tribal homelands, and have continued to circulate through Canada and the US, maintaining old inter-tribal relationships and building new ones.

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