Episode 290: The World of the Wampanoag, Part 1 Transcription

Liz Covart: *Ben Franklin's World* is a production of the Omohundro Institute, and this series is made possible with support from Mass Humanities.

[00:00:30] New England, today that name evokes a mental image of a region in the northeastern United States. New England is region made up of six states: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. All but one of those states borders the Atlantic Ocean. In its interior, much of New England has a rocky, even mountainous topography, heavily forested in many places. Traveling north from Virginia, Captain John Smith gave the region this English name in 1616. But New England has had a different name for much longer.

Lorén Spears: [00:01:00] The word that comes to my mind is the Dawnland because that's used a lot today to represent us, the people of the East. Where the sun rises in the morning. We're the people of the dawn. So I'm Lorén Spears. I'm the executive director of Tomaquag Museum. (Speaks Narragansett) So what I said to you in my language was, hello, and that I'm Lorén Spears and my traditional name is Makasoomi Pashow and I am Narragansett Niantic and welcome to the homelands of the Narragansett people.

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Darius Coombs: We know, for my people, we've been around this area for over 12, 000 years. And we believe we come from the southwest, after a mini ice age had happened, so that's why we believe all South, Central and North American Indigenous people are pretty much all the same in a way, how we think about land, life in general. So we worked our way up here. Then we been here, like I said, about 12,000 years. My name is Darius Coombs. I'm Mashpee Wampanoag. I'm the director of Wampanoag and Algonquin Interpreter training and I work at Plimoth Patuxet Museum.

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Liz Covart: Before New England was New England, it was the Dawnland, a region that still serves as the homeland of numerous Native American peoples, including the Wabanaki, Abenaki, Pequots, Mohican, Mahican, Nipmuc, Niantic, Narragansett, and Wampanoag to name just a few. Over the next two episodes, we'll explore the world of the Wampanoag before and after 1620 when 100 English settlers arrived in their world on a ship called the Mayflower to a place the English would call Plymouth.

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Those settlers have been called pilgrims over the years, and this year 2020, is the 400th anniversary of their arrival in New England. Now, somethings changed dramatically for the Wampanoag, but some aspects of Wampanoag life and culture persisted, as did the Wampanoag, who lived and still live in Massachusetts and beyond. Now, when those 100 English colonists arrived, and what is today Plymouth, Massachusetts, they settled in the lands of the Wampanoag. In this episode, Episode 290, our focus will be on life, cultures and trade in the world of the Wampanoag, and their neighbors, up to December 16, 1620 the day the Mayflower

[00:03:00] made its way into Plymouth harbor.

Liz Covart: Our focus on life, cultures and trade will help us develop a better understanding for the peoples, places, and circumstances of the World of the Wampanoag. So, just who were and are the Wampanoag, who lived and live around present day Plymouth?

[00:03:30] Who are some of their closest neighbors the Narragansett who lived to the south? First, we'll speak with Darius Coombs and Lorén Spears. Darius works at Plimoth Patuxet Museums, living history museums, founded in the 1940s that researches and interprets the Wampanoag people and the colonial English community that settled amongst them in the 1600s. Lorén is the executive director of the Tomaquag Museum, which was founded in 1958 by a Narragansett Pokanoket Wampanoag woman named Mary E. Glasko. The Tomaquag Museum is Rhode Island's first and only Indigenous museum.

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Darius Coombs: I'm still on my homeland today. I am Mashpee Wampanoag. And Mashpee's only maybe 20, 30 miles south of here. But the original home in Wampanoag overall is large parts of Massachusetts, going in parts of Rhode Island. And for Wampanoag nation, we probably numbered over 100,000 at one time, today is maybe about 15,000. In amongst that 100,000 at one time, there was probably over 70

[00:04:30] Wampanoag communities. If you were traveling back then right in this area around here, what is known as Plymouth today. And if I was from here and you came up to me and asked me what I was I would say I'm a Patuxet, how about yourself? And I wouldn't say Wampanoag, because Wampanoag is a nation of people. And if you're traveling back then, I would expect you to know that already, this is Wampanoag country. So I would describe myself, Wampanoag of speaking community I'm from. So all around this area known as Plymouth today is what we call Patuxet.

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Lorén Spears: When we speak to Narragansett, we are speaking to a nation. I have heard that in the times of Verrazano, there may have been 100,000 people along Narragansett Bay. Now when you think of Narragansett Bay, it's called Narragansett Bay for a reason in that it was part of our homeland. And I think that the Narragansett people were before European contact, part of, not only the mainland that we now think of as Rhode Island, but also the islands in the bay on both the East Bay and West Bay sides. And it wasn't until you got farther up into what's now called Bristol Warren today, that it went more into Wampanoag territory.

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Lorén Spears: We had relationships with other nations that paid tribute to, is the way that historians often reference it, to the Narragansett for protection. So I mentioned to you that I was Narragansett Niantic. So I am part and a citizen of the federally recognized tribal nations of the Narragansett nation. However, in our history, we had kinship relationships with other nations. And in those relationships in some cases, smaller nations like the Niantic, the Nipmuc, and some of the Wampanoag nations paid tribute to the Narragansett. There were even tribal nations to my understanding out on Montauk and Long Island, and on Block Island and other islands that were part of what you might consider a Confederacy of some sort or an alliance that was formed in order to protect people in the region. And so the Narragansett before European contact was very large and what some people might use as a term powerful nation.

Lorén Spears:

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Darius Coombs: A lot of things have been brought up the Narragansett and Wampanoags. A lot of people say we were enemies, but it can't be just that black and white. They didn't like each other, or they did like each other. There was a lot of things going on back then. And it could have been small family things going on. But it shows in the records and the writings later on that people did get along. The Narragansett and the Wampanoags did have ties, which were positive, so it wasn't just all bad between the two people.

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Lorén Spears: The Narragansett and the Wampanoag are both Algonquin peoples, we have a similar language we were interacting with each other having kinship relationships. We live in a similar ecosystem, Eastern, woodland, coastal ecosystems, we have similar life ways. We are unique and individual people. However, we have similarities between us.

Liz Covart: The Wampanoag leader Ousamequin or the Massasoit decided to enter into a diplomatic treaty with the English settlers at Plymouth in 1621. The Narragansett did not. So these seem like different choices about how to engage with the settlers. Now before the English settlers established their colony, it seems that relationship between the Wampanoag and Narragansett could have been positive and fluid, with some Narragansett people intermarrying with some Wampanoag people, and some Wampanoag paying tribute to the Narragansett nation in exchange for protection from other Native American peoples, or from the occasional European fishermen, trader, or enslaver. We also know that the Wampanoag Narragansett peoples shared many similar ideas and traditions, such as the 13 Moon calendar, and their lives, on the land, and on the water.

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Lorén Spears: As Indigenous people, we are the land, our life ways are from the land. We have our ceremonies based on this land, the 13 Thanksgivings that we celebrate in a year are connected to the gifts of the land that the Creator has blessed us with. And our stories are in this land, our history is in this land, our languages in this land, our ceremonies, the clothes that we traditionally wear, our homes that we traditionally build, the means of travel that we created, all come from this land. And so when we think about this place, it's our homeland. But literally, our ancestors are in this land.

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[00:09:30] Our traditional creation story is that we're actually created from the clay that the creator formed us right out of the soil that is attached to the water out of the river beds, and created up here. And so our people have been here since time immemorial, and archeologists and anthropologists every so often they find a new, what they call a discovery, about our history, and they just keep going back in time. I believe right now there are about 10,000 years that we've been in this place.

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Liz Covart: Land and water are important to the Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples, as Lorén Spears noted, and Narragansett creation story tells how the creator formed the

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Narragansett from the clay created by the land, soil and water. This deep connection in the land highlights one reason why both the Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples observe a 13 month here.

Darius Coombs: And seasons are very important. Everybody celebrates New Year's all around the world. But there's always different times you celebrate New Year's depending on the culture of people. My culture, people we celebrate it when everything comes to life.

[00:10:30] And that's during springtime and that just makes sense. By that time of year, that's when the fish start running upstream. That's when the shad bush comes out, blooms, that's when the squirrel are as big as an oak leaf, and that's different signs of when your new years happens. And also different signs when you start planting.

Liz Covart: The Wampanoag Narragansett, who lived during the 16th and 17th centuries, organize their society around seasonal sustainable food supply. In spring in summer, you'd find both the peoples living in villages near the coastal waters where they

[00:11:00] fished and the soils where they planted. In the winter and fall you'd find them inland removed to large winter encampments, where they store the food they had grown and harvested or hunted and fished in earlier months and where the trees and distance from the water protected them from icy winds.

Lorén Spears: So I'm going to do a summer village for now. So in my mind, I envision our ancestors, there are people in the village mothers and fathers moving about with

[00:11:30] grandparents, they're helping with children. They are tending older people and women tending gardens and going out and gathering wild edibles and men and sometimes women. I like to remind people women hunted too. It's Eurocentric kind of a colonized mind to erase women from fishing and hunting and things of that nature. But they were doing that as well.

[00:12:00] And there were people making tools so people weaving nets and weaving baskets and making pottery. You're by the water and you're harvesting this clay and you're tempering the clay with shell bits and you're forming this clay and you're using shells and stone tools to smooth the clay and you're putting it either adjacent to the fire or you're digging down into the coals to fire that pot and create the cooking pots and the storage pots. You're collecting and harvesting materials for basketry depending on the season and the time, grape vine, ash, other woods, oak, cedar and you're making birch bark containers and cedar containers and you're making cordage from

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bulrush cat tail, dogbane, milkweed and you're harvesting and collecting these fibers and materials for that. You're cooking food, families have to eat.

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Darius Coombs: That was the cycle, during the fall, winter that's when you live in your big communities. Our fall and winter communities number over 70, as I was saying, they range in size from a few 100 to probably 2,000 or 3000 people. You're looking at more or less like small towns and each community would govern themselves, would have their sachem, which means Chief, he or she would have their own councilmen and they made the best decisions for their community. And what we did during the winter, you see a lot of the men hunting.

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The four big animals we would hunt for, we would go for deer, black bear, moose, elk. A lot of small game like rabbits, squirrels, beavers, otters, raccoons. We also go for a lot of birds, ducks, partridge, quail, turkeys. The women probably spend a lot of time beside the houses making baskets, mats, doing a lot of the cooking.

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Lorén Spears: These are families you know people, often fictionalized Indigenous people and kind of erase the humanity of that. These are families that are working together and doing the jobs of the day.

Liz Covart: All seasons were seasons for making and gathering the necessaries of life; food, storage containers, fishing nets, tools, and reed mats. Which among other functions, reed mats were used in Wampanoag and Narragansett wigwams or wetus, traditional dome hut homes used in the 16th and 17th centuries. Now, how do we know about these tools and other necessaries of life? How do we know about the making of these

[00:14:30] tools? Well, in addition to having information from a rich oral tradition, passed from Wampanoag elders to Wampanoag youth and a written historical record, we also have archeological evidence from this period. In fact, archeology can tell us a lot about the tools and other items in the world of the Wampanoag in the 16th and 17th centuries.

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Jade Luiz: Archeology really is the study of the human past through the objects that people left behind. And objects aren't just the things that people made and dropped, but can also be evidence of structures that they had and ways that they were living. So archeologists also get really excited about dirt stains. I'm Dr. Jade Lewis and curator collections here Plimoth Patuxet Museums.

Liz Covart: Jade is also a historical archeologist.

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Jade Luiz: So a lot of people, when they think about archeology, they think about the digging. Archeologists go out and they do really scientific excavation of different sites. When archeologists are going out into the field they're not specifically just looking for cool shiny artifacts, but they're looking at how those artifacts relate to each other, relate to the landscape, relate those stains in the dirt, and try and put together a picture of how people are living in the past and sort of a snapshot in time.

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Liz Covart: When I spoke with Jade, she was able to tell me about the archeological digs that have taken place very near to where the pilgrims landed at the Wampanoag site of Patuxet, and at a new site in downtown Plymouth, which is being excavated by archeologists from UMass Boston's Fiske Memorial Center for Archeological Research. I asked Jade about the different snapshots that archeological evidence could provide us about Wampanoag daily life during the 16th and 17th centuries.

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Jade Luiz: Wampanoag people did have a really significant weaving culture that they did various designs. They would make fiber out of various types of plants, and had a large number of natural dyes. Once you have the arrival of Europeans, and things like the wool cloth can get accessed, you actually have Wampanoag people taking that wool cloth in pieces and reweaving it in ways that are meaningful to Wampanoag.

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[00:17:00] Unfortunately, in archeology, you don't get a whole lot of fabric preservation, it's a very particular type of circumstances that allow you to get exciting preservation like fabrics. Reed mats were something that would have been woven and either used to cover summer wetus, provide a little bit more breeze, and also used indoors in the winter. So we know through the oral history, and also just through how people were settling that they're accessing these reeds in the summer, in the spring, and then probably the women were weaving these over that period.

[00:17:30] And archaeologically, the evidence for this weaving is, we find bone mat needles all the time. And a lot of earlier, archeology was saying that they were awls for punching leather, but they're just too thin and too fragile to work their way through leather. So a lot of those things that have been formally thought to be awls, we're now looking at and going, "Oh, these are big mat needles to help in the weaving of these mats."

Liz Covart: Archeological evidence can tell us a lot about the material world of the Wampanoag.

[00:18:00] We know from oral histories that women made mats from cattail reeds, which they prepared for weaving. These mats were important and useful in Wampanoag life. And the archeological evidence helps us see just how they wove those mats. The archeological record can also help us see another aspect of this, the fact that Wampanoag and Narragansett women sometimes planted their corn, beans and squash using fish caught from the ocean rivers and streams around them.

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Lorén Spears: We grew our massive gardens really, large agricultural gardens, in our summer villages. The corn, the bean and the squash were actually grown together, it's often referred to as the three sisters, the corn grows up as the eldest sister and is the tallest. And the bean wraps around the corn stalk and grows up, and it gives nitrogen back to the soil. And so that gives a nutrient back to the soil, that our ancestors understood that science, and the squash grew and its big leaves gave shade to the soil, which allowed the moisture to stay in and allowed them to have this relationship that went back and forth. And so in preparation, we would put fish in the soil, and

[00:19:00] that fish would break down and give extreme nutrients to the soil. So when we talk about symbiotic relationships between the land and the water, that's a perfect example of that.

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Darius Coombs: Herring. Herring start running upstream during the spring, during the new year, that's a sign of the new year. When you see that fish, come up from the ocean, what they do, the fish come up rivers from the ocean, and they go lay their eggs and they go back down stream afterwards. So we eat the herring quite a bit. Still, amongst our culture, that's a common food for us. So we eat the herring. But a lot of times we also use it for fertilizer.

[00:20:00] We dig a hole in the ground, we put fish down in the hole, and we mound it over and that's when we plant that corn and beans and when the fish decomposes into Mother Earth, into the ground is going to add nutrients back into the ground. I don't think it was done every year because that's a lot of fish. Back then a planting field for one family may take up an acre or two of land. So you didn't need to do it every year either. You always plant right next to a river. And when you plant it next to a river the land's fertile as it is.

Jade Luiz: We have that piece of dirt on display. And if you don't know what you're looking at, it looks very strange. But you can actually see the fish bones which are probably hearing bones in the base of this planting mound and see how that looked in the

[00:20:30] field before it was taken out. The history of this is that this idea of Squanto teaching the English how to plant with fish was pretty unchallenged until about the 1970s and 1980s, where historians started to wonder if this is in fact, a European practice that is being brought over by, maybe not the Mayflower passengers, but other Europeans before the Mayflower passengers and taught to Indigenous people in the northeast.

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A really important scholar here at the museum, Nanepashemet. He saw these new ideas coming out, he decided to go into the historical documents and pull out every single instance of a European saying that this is this weird way that Indigenous people are planting corn or this is the only way that we can plant with corn, it was shown to us by Indigenous people. Now at that same time he was doing that research and archeologist was researching a planting field in Truro, Massachusetts noting that you have these fish bones that are showing up in these planning fields and worked with Nanepashemet to kind of join forces as far as research.

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Liz Covart: Oral histories, written histories and archeological evidence tells us that the Narragansett and Wampanoag peoples use fish in a well-thought-out system for

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planting their crops that helped to ensure their planting soils would yield bountiful harvests of corn, beans, and squash crops that could be consumed fresh were dried and stored for later use. As Lorén Spears remarked, and his Darius Coombs described, water is just as important as land.

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Darius Coombs: We have natural springs going all up and down the rivers. You always plant during the spring and summer right next to a river and by planting next to a river the land is pretty fertile as it is. Fishing is very, very big amongst our culture, amongst our nation. We have a lot of fish in our diet during the spring and the summer. The freshwater fish, bass, pickerel, trout, salmon, perch, you also have eel, snapping turtles. You go out in the salt water, you got the striped bass, you got the blue fish, you got flounder, so much flounder out in the ocean, they can walk out there, back then and spear them.

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Lorén Spears: We traded on the water. You know you went from one place to the other on the water, you visited family and friends on the water, you went by the open ocean and the bay and fed your community on the bounty of that water, those gifts of the sea.

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One of my most profound thoughts is around how did our ancestors harvest the whale. That was part of our annual life way to have the harvest of the whale. And that whale could feed large quantities of people, many, many villages at one time. And the idea of our ancestors out there and dugout mishoons or canoes working in collaboration to hunt this mammoth animal and having a dozen canoes out there and strategically positioning yourself and having ceremony before to ensure your protection to get there and hunt the whale safely and then be able to come back and then have the Thanksgiving ceremony and harvest where we all come together and multiple villages that were providing this food and this resource for many, many people is just amazing.

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Things have changed. We hunted seals, and whales and those are animals that we're not really hunting today because they're just not in the abundance that they once were in this region. When colonization and conquests happened, they changed the land.

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Liz Covart: Water provided the Narragansett and Wampanoag with fertile soils for their crops, fish to eat and to fertilize with, and with water mammals like seals and whales that would feed multiple villages. Now, I'd like for us to go back to Lorén Spears, picturing her ancestors out on the open ocean hunting for whales in mishoons or canoes. What did these watercraft look like if they could handle the open sea and carry enough men to hunt down a whale.

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Darius Coombs: Canoes, kayaks all mean the same thing, they're boats. For our language it's mishoon, around here. I personally have made probably 50 or 60 boats myself, mishoon notches, and our boats range in size anywheres from a nine foot, one man boat, to we have boats big enough to carry over 40 men. We have 40 man boats being one tree. And those were either made out of white pine, chestnut and even white oak. I always tell folks you have to put yourself back in time when we have natural resources around here for which you have white pines around here grown over 150 foot height, over six foot wide. They would not have been unusual to see a 30 or 40 man boat being sailed out to Nantucket Island, and Nantucket's about 25, 30 miles off of Cape Cod. There's different ways of moving these boats, you can paddle them, you can pull them along the shore or you can sail them. We have three different recordings of folks seeing those boats being sailed. And they're used for fishing, traveling trading.

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Liz Covart: Just imagine how large these boats were. They were longer than three school buses placed end to end. Now the Wampanoag had a process for turning large trees, like those that Darius Coombs just described, into the watercraft they needed to fish travel, trade, and hunt for whales.

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Darius Coombs: They're made from a log, made from a tree. People automatically think you chop these boats out, they're not chopped out. They're made by fire. You light the log on fire, let it burn down, then you scrape out the inside. So you burn scrape, burn, scrape until you're done.

This is the type of fire you have, you don't burn the soft wood inside, the types of wood you want to burn is a lot of oaks and maple. And when you burn oaks and maple inside of a log, that'll burn down to hot coals so you can direct the heat right we want it to be. If you burn pine inside of a pine tree, it's a soft wood it flares up really quick and you can't control the flame. So you don't want to use pine, you don't

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want to use a basswood, because those are soft woods. Want to use a hard wood, produce a lot of heat and a low flame.

Fire is not just used for the making of the boat, the hauling of the boat, it has a lot of benefits. Just the other day we roasted two ducks over the boat while it was being made. So it keeps you warm. You can roast food over it. You have light, but the main purpose is to make it burning, burning and scraping.

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Liz Covart: With mishoons for sea and river travel, the Wampanoag use the waters around them as highways. As Lorén Spears noted earlier, the Wampanoag and Narragansett used their boats to visit friends and family who lived in different parts of the North American northeast. They also used their boats to conduct trade.

Jade Luiz: Before the arrival of Europeans. There's a lot of evidence for massive trade networks throughout the Northeast.

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Liz Covart: That's historical archeologist and Plimoth Patuxet Museum's curator Jade Luiz talking about the Patuxet Wampanoag, who lived right in the same area where the settlers founded Plymouth. She's talking about how before the English arrived, and there was a steady flow of native peoples and goods through Patuxet.

Jade Luiz: Smack in the middle of Patuxet, materials are coming from as far away as the Great Lakes region, New York, Pennsylvania, Maine. And oral history suggests that those trade networks extended further. And so you have a lot of the waterways being used to transport goods. You also have a lot of people going in and out of different communities and moving around a lot as political alliances are built, trade networks are expanded. And so there's I think, this cultural idea of Indigenous people being isolated in their own little groups and enclaves but in fact, there was a constant movement of people around, and interaction with different groups over time.

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Liz Covart: The Wampanoag had expansive trade networks. They traded with their neighbors, some as close as the women sachems among the Massachusett. And they traded as far west as the Great Lakes, north into Canada, and south into the Carolinas, and

perhaps even into Florida. How did these trade networks work and what kinds of goods did these Eastern Woodlands people's trade for?

Jade Luiz:

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It's not just a Wampanoag person going all the way to the Great Lakes, it's more of different communities that are connected to each other. It seems that probably you'd have local communities in the Great Lakes region who would trade goods into nearby communities and those nearby communities would then move things down the line. So you might never go all the way to the Great Lakes region as a Wampanoag person, but you would at least have connections through that long range.

Darius Coombs:

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Trade is nothing new amongst our people. We had trade relations going toward the Great Lakes, we had trade relations going to Canada, with Indigenous peoples. As far south of the Carolinas, it wasn't us necessarily having to gone down there physically, to do the trading. But a lot of the time you had the stuff that bounced this way up here, or cross here through different networks.

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The only type of metal you were seeing around here, pre-European would have been copper. Copper is not found around here, but it's found out in the Great Lakes. So we could have went out there, but it wasn't necessary for us to go out there. It made its way out here. So you have that network of trading all the time. There's all different signs of people coming on the coast from what is known as Canada, a lot of the Mi'kmaq people were taking their birch bark boats down here along the coastline, and doing a lot of intermarrying, a lot of diplomacy like that. So trading networks, yeah, we had them. It was necessary, you had people that had something better than you, and it might have been different, but just keep relations good. Do friendly trading back and forth.

Liz Covart:

As Lorén Spears tells us, people were coming to and from what we would consider to be a long way away.

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Lorén Spears:

There's old dances that we have, like the alligator dance, that our community has been dancing for many, many years. Well, guess what, there's no alligators in Rhode Island. However, that tells you about how we went down the waterways, down the Atlantic and down those different river systems and met up with. And maybe we

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didn't go all the way to Florida, but maybe we were meeting with people in those different spaces. And that's how you were sharing different songs and different dances and different ceremonies just as we do today. When we visit other tribal nations, you bring gifts. I'm wearing wampum today, and we would bring gifts of that wampum to other regions.

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Liz Covart: The Narragansett and Wampanoag engaged in trade, primarily to forge good kinship, and diplomatic relations. As Lorén Spears just discussed, sometimes trade functioned as a cultural exchange, whereby goods, songs, dances, and cultural knowledge were exchanged between different groups of people. As Darius Coombs, put it, trade for the Wampanoag, it wasn't just about exchanging something you have for something different that you need or want. Trading was also about creating and maintaining friendly relationships with other peoples.

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Whether they traded physical goods, songs, dances, or other forms of cultural knowledge and traditions, the people of the Dawnlands traded to build and maintain positive understandings and positive relationships with neighboring and distant peoples. So how did this long cultural tradition of trade inform how they approached trading with Europeans? For one thing, trading with Europeans wasn't anything new. The Wampanoag, for instance, have been interacting with Europeans for almost 100 years before the arrival of the Mayflower.

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Jade Luiz: So you have Europeans coming to the northeast, primarily to access the cod fisheries. Cod was huge business in the 16th and 17th century, and you had traders who would encounter Indigenous people on these shores and trade or interact with them. So when the people on the Mayflower arrived, the Wampanoag are familiar with them. They've maybe encountered Europeans themselves, they had at least encountered probably other Indigenous people who had traded or communicated with Europeans. And there's, in many ways, a complicated history that's already been established for 100 years before Mayflower arrives.

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Darius Coombs: There were people coming over, the first time there was written recording was Verrazzano. He went down and did some trading with the Narragansetts on Rhode Island.

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Liz Covart: In addition to what we know from oral histories, we also know from written European sources that like many Native Peoples along the North American Atlantic coast, the Wampanoag have been interacting with Europeans from Spain, France, the Netherlands, and England since the 1520s, just as they did when Giovanni Verrazano explored the Atlantic coast for France in 1524.

[00:33:30] What did Verrazzano and the men who followed him look for? What did they hope to gain from their trade with Northeastern Native Americans like the Wampanoag? Stay tuned, as we'll answer these questions, and explore the Wampanoag early trade and encounter with Europeans, right after we hear from our episode sponsors.

Liz Covart As you're listening to this series, the World of the Wampanoag, you may want to check out a new book coming next spring, from our friends at the Library of America, *Plymouth Colony: Narratives of English Settlement and Native Resistance from the Mayflower to King Philip's War*. This volume is edited by scholars Lisa Brooks and Kelly Wisecup. Published for Plymouth's 400th anniversary, Plymouth Colony includes a vast array of writings from multiple points of view, including Indigenous voices and perspectives, so it can give its readers a multifaceted view of Plymouth Colony, which was formed within Wampanoag homelands.

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Plymouth Colony includes a full text of William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, his genuine reflections of the settlement, which he kept over decades. The volume also includes a wide range of documents that provide insight into the experiences of the Wampanoag people and their leaders. The nonprofit Library of America champions our nation's cultural heritage by publishing America's greatest writing, and authoritative new additions, and providing resources for readers to explore this rich living legacy. To explore and pre-order Library of America's *Plymouth Colony: Narratives of English Settlement and Native Resistance from the Mayflower to King Philip's War*, visit BenFranklinsworld.com/Plymouth. That's BenFranklinsworld.com/Plymouth.

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You may also be interested in a new archeology exhibit at the Plimoth Patuxet Museums, which commemorates the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower. The exhibit is called "History in a New Light: Illuminating Archeology of Historic Patuxet and Plymouth". Founded in 1947, as a museum, Plimoth Patuxet offers powerful personal encounters with history, built on thorough research about the

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Wampanoag people and the English community who settle amongst them in the 1600s.

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Plimoth Patuxet also maintains one of the most significant repositories of New England 17th century archeology. The exhibit "History in a New Light: Illuminating Archeology of Historic Patuxet and Plymouth" uses archeology, documentary research, oral history, and fine and decorative arts. It's the first major exhibit to display artifacts from both the Wampanoag village of Patuxet and the site of the original 1620 European settlement, which were discovered beginning in 2016 by Project 400 archeologists, which is an ongoing archeological research initiative, conducted in partnership with the Andrew Fiske Center for Archeological Research

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at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, the town of Plymouth, and the Plimoth Patuxet museums.

Now, in addition to finding the first evidence of these overlapping settlements, this research has forced scholars to reevaluate their understandings of daily life in early Plymouth and the nature of colonial and Indigenous interactions. To learn more

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about the exhibit "History in a New Light", or to plan your next visit to the Plimoth Patuxet museums, visit BenFranklinsworld.com/archeology. That's BenFranklinsworld.com/archeology.

Liz Covart: So what did Verrazano and the men who followed him look for? What did they hope to gain from their trade with North Eastern Native Americans like the Wampanoag?

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Darius Coombs: They came over for beaver skins. They wanted the beaver and otter, a lot of beaver and otter were decimated over in Europe. And we had plenty around here. This is important, you hear the terms fishermen and traders. In that one breath you got to say fishermen, traders, and then slavers, because that's fact. These people weren't just coming over for fishing and trading, they would take the Native people back over to Europe.

Liz Covart: European explorers and fishermen traded for furs and peltry they no longer had in Europe, and for foodstuffs that they needed to support their seasonal fishing villages, or for the return voyages across the Atlantic. Now sometimes these explorers and

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[00:37:30] fishermen kidnapped and in some instances, also enslaved Native peoples, including a well-known member of the Wampanoag nation.

Andrew Lipman: Best known to most people as Squanto, Tisquantum was a Wampanoag man, who was taken captive by English sailors in 1614, returned to his home in what is now the town of Plymouth, which he knew is Patuxet in the year 1619.

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Liz Covart: Andrew Lipman is an associate professor of history at Barnard College, and the author of the forthcoming book, *The Death and Life of Squanto*.

Andrew Lipman: He was a witness, at least at a distance to the visits of Bartholomew Gosnold to Cape Cod Bay in 1602, probably to visit of Martin Pring in 1605 and Samuel de Champlain in 1605, as well. If we sort of guess what his age was, probably was not a particularly active participant in those encounters, but almost certainly would have seen ships at a distance, would have heard accounts of people who participated in those visits, even

[00:38:30] picked up and be able to see some of the trade goods that were exchanged in those visits.

Liz Covart: European explorers like Bartholomew Gosnold, interacted and traded with Wampanoag men to gather intelligence about the land, its people, and its resources. Often, communication in these exchanges could be very difficult, as few Europeans spoke Wampanoag and few Wampanoags spoke European languages. Sometimes,

[00:39:00] European traders and explorers took Native men like Tisquantum captive with the goal of creating translators, but as Andrew Lipman tells us, they were also enslaving these Native men too.

Andrew Lipman: From these early accounts, we know that there's several different modes of communication. There's just general sort of hand sign pointing the way that anyone in a country where they don't know a single word sort of gets by. There are enough repeat visitors from 1605 onwards, other Native men from the Dawnland regions from both near Patuxet and further away, who've been taken as captives who then

[00:39:30] start to act as translators and go-betweens.

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This is where Tisquantum's story is a bit different from the majority of Native men take captive. Most of the Native men taken captive by English people, and as well by French as well, were brought immediately back to either England or France. Tisquantum is a little different, in that his captor, Thomas Hunt, took those two dozen men. He was planning to sell them not to use them as translators or guides, but to sell them as slaves into a Spanish market for enslaved Indigenous people.

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Liz Covart: Prior to 1620 the Wampanoag's trade with European visitors often took the form of a one-way trade or exchange, where Europeans took Wampanoag men captive and unwittingly exchanged microbes that unleashed deadly periods of pandemic, that wiped out entire villages of Wampanoag people like those who lived at Patuxet.

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Darius Coombs: We suspected from a major epidemic that wiped out probably up to 90% of people in a two or three year span. Our skin turned yellow, people had open sores on their bodies, and they died within two or three days. Common thought over the year is hepatitis. People say smallpox, though we kind of ruled out smallpox.

Disease control came out with something over 10 years ago, they believe it was from the French trade ships up in Maine. And when those trade ships came over, they would have rats on the ships and the rats would get off and the fetus of the rats will get into the water system create an infectious liver disease that swept along the long coastline. It was between probably 1616 and 1619. It went 30, 40 miles inland along the coast of Maine wiped out whole nations of people. And like I said, for Wampanoag people, affected us up to 90%. It stopped right before the Narragansett had started. This epidemic that came here was three years before the pilgrims got here.

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Liz Covart: European diseases ravaged the North American northeast and devastated the Wampanoag. As Darius Coombs noted, it's likely that 90% of the Wampanoag were infected by the great epidemic of 1616 to 1619. The epidemic created profound loss and wrought great devastation among the Wampanoag. It also created a unique and very recent set of conditions for the English colonists who sailed aboard the Mayflower.

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[00:42:00] Many European settlers seemed to think that North America was not a settled place. In fact, they often wrote about it that way, sometimes just to justify their taking of land. But when the pilgrims landed, they encountered a place that while the homeland of the Wampanoag for thousands of years, was very recently, because of the epidemic, a much less populated place.

Darius Coombs: When they got here it was a changed place. When they got here it was a year, two years after that epidemic hit us. If they landed four or five years before, it might have been a different story, this whole area was populated with people. And when they

[00:42:30] landed in Patuxet, this whole area was devastated. The nearest living communities was probably what was called Manomet, about 10 miles south. We're a caring people, a loving people. But it's also the time which people needed each other. They needed an ally, because of the Native communities that didn't care for them being here and also, we needed an ally a lot of the time, because we just got devastated. We needed help, in a way they needed each other. It was a very, very confusing time too. The leaders, we lost, the chiefs, the medicine people, the political leaders.

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Liz Covart: On December 16, 1620, the ship Mayflower sailed into Plymouth harbor. The English colonists aboard her found a cleared area that had recently been the home of a Wampanoag spring and summer village called Patuxet. Unbeknownst to the colonists, the epidemic that raged up until a year before their arrival, had wiped out most of the Wampanoag Patuxet population.

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Darius Coombs: They landed here, they landed in Wampanoag, country. That's when they landed in Patuxet, and when they landed here, they found devastation. And that's when they started building in December 1620.

Lorén Spears: Things started to change in the 1600s as the pilgrims, as we know, and we're talking about 400 years since they landed here, with the Mayflower and that was the beginning of the change. When people started to, quote unquote, settle here, meaning that they didn't leave. That started this huge change in the land.

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[00:44:00]

Liz Covart: The world of the Wampanoag. After thousands of years in the Dawnlands, the Wampanoag had a deeply established economy, culture and politics. They'd also experienced more than 100 years of encounters with Europeans. But their world had changed in the wake of the destabilizing epidemic, in just a few years before the pilgrims arrived in 1620. So the specific circumstances when the Mayflower sailed into what the English would call Plymouth Harbor, were very new.

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Join us next week for our next episode, when we explore the world of the Wampanoag in 1620 and beyond. A world that now included the pilgrims and their settlement at Plymouth. This episode is part of a two-episode series about the world of the Wampanoag, which is co-written and co-produced by Liz Covart and Karen Wulf and made possible with support from Mass Humanities.

[00:45:00] If you're looking for more information about our series, our guest experts and scholars or notes and links for everything we discussed today, visit the show notes page, BenFranklinsworld.com/290. The show notes page is also where you'll find a list of resources and texts that we used to write this series. Plus, you'll also find some pictures of the objects we discussed today, like mishoons and fishbones as fertilizer. Again, you can access this list of resources and the pictures at BenFranklinsworld.com/290.

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We're grateful to the large number of historians, travel experts and spokespeople and museum professionals who took the time to speak with us during the course of our research. We're also grateful for the research assistance provided by Gail Coughlin and Eugene Tesdahl. The original music you heard throughout this episode was composed by Joel Rosten in collaboration with Wampanoag musician Derwood van der Hoop with additional music by Narragansett musicians, Sherenté Harris, Lynsea Montanari and Nkeke Harris.

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The Wampanoag and Narragansett songs included in the score and arranged throughout this episode were composed by Derwood van der Hoop, Sherenté

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Harris, and Nkeke Harris. Production assistance for this podcast comes from the Omohundro Institute's digital audio team, Joseph Adelman, Martha Howard, Holly White, and Karen Wulf. Be sure to tune in next week to hear our second episode in the World of the Wampanoag series, the World of the Wampanoag: 1620 and Beyond.

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Finally, any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this episode do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. *Ben Franklin's World* is a production of the Omohundro Institute, and this series is made possible with support from Mass Humanities.