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Conversations Between Communities: UMass Boston Archaeology for and with the Nipmuc Nation & the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation

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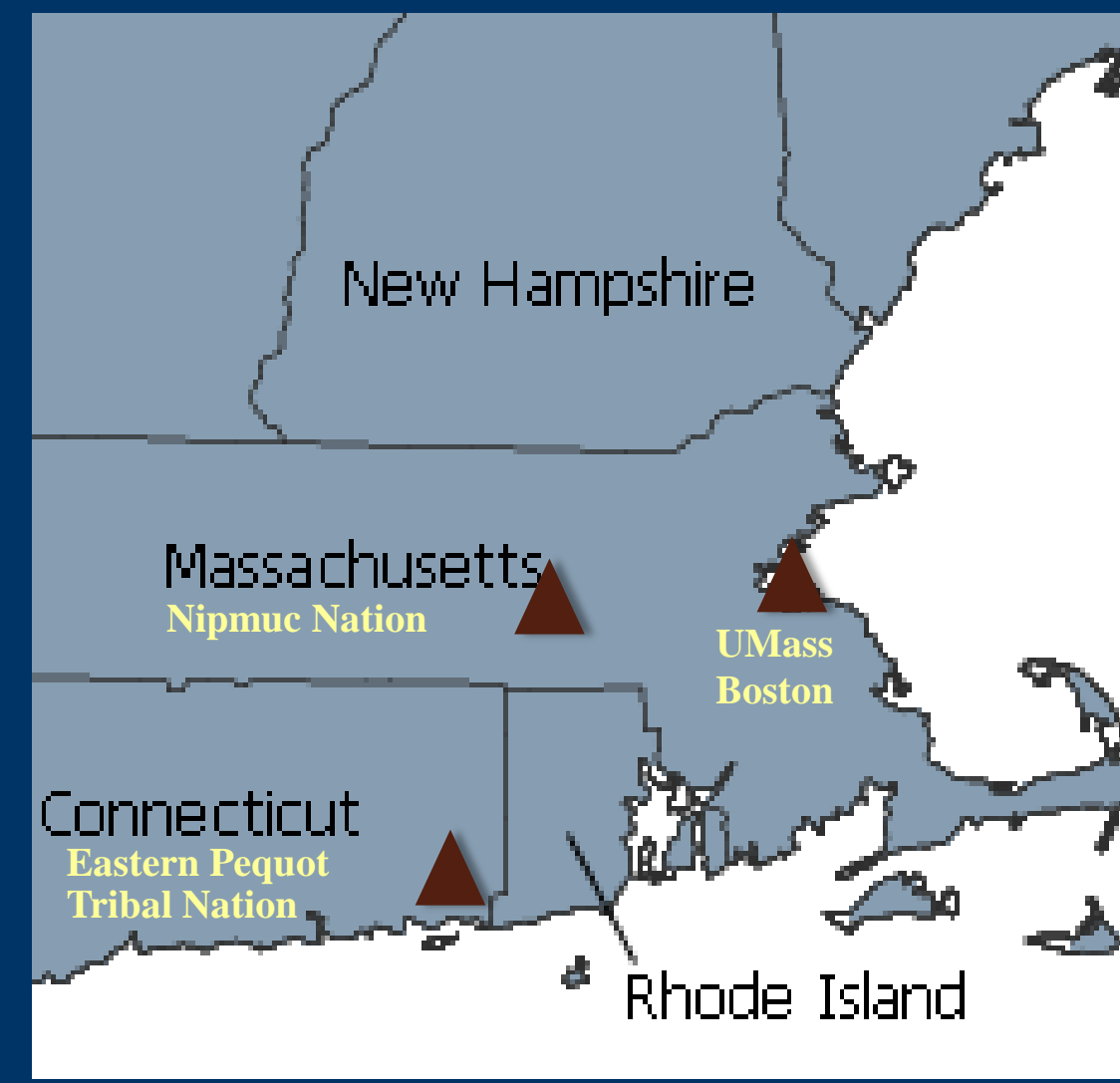
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Conversations Between Communities

UMass Boston Archaeology *for and with* the Nipmuc Nation & the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation



Hassanamesit Woods Archaeological Field School

Professor Stephen A. Mrozowski (Anthropology)



Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School

Professor Stephen W. Silliman (Anthropology)

Community-engaged scholarship, learning, and service are becoming important parts of university missions, ensuring that academic projects do not just “take” but also give back in meaningful ways. For Native American communities and archaeologists who come from and work with them, this kind of research sensitivity and community accountability is fundamentally important. Archaeological projects with, by, and for Native American communities vary as much in their structures and goals as the communities themselves. In order to meet the desires and needs of each community, two archaeological field schools at UMass Boston – Hassanamesit Woods (Grafton, Massachusetts) and Eastern Pequot (North Stonington, Connecticut) – have employed different levels of consultation and collaboration to engage the Nipmuc and the Eastern Pequot communities in the archaeology conducted on their lands. Similarities and differences between artifacts unearthed speak to each community’s unique experiences over the last 400 years, providing new insights to spark conversations between these indigenous groups and the archaeologists and students who work with them. The artifacts discovered fall into four main categories – connections to a deeper past, foodways, architecture, and daily lives – that broadly encapsulate life at a Nipmuc homesite and at several 18th- and 19th-century households on the Eastern Pequot reservation.

Objectives of Hassanamesit Woods Archaeological Field School

1. Illuminate part of the Nipmuc past through a collaborative program of consultation and research that focuses on the Hassanamesit community of what is today Grafton, Massachusetts.
2. Provide a robust picture of the Sarah Philips/Sarah Boston farmstead using archaeology, documents, oral history, material culture, environmental archaeology, and tribal consultation.
3. Train undergraduate and graduate students from UMass Boston and other institutions in interdisciplinary archaeology including excavation techniques, environmental sampling, and geophysical testing within a collaborative framework.
4. Develop better methods of consultation and collaboration between UMass Boston and the Nipmuc Nation in meeting their broader heritage preservation and community education goals.

Objectives of Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School

1. Assist with locating historical cultural sites on the Eastern Pequot reservation, established in 1683 and still occupied, and provide historic preservation and archaeological services at low to no cost.
2. Study Eastern Pequot house sites to understand the persistence of this Native American community in the colonial world of southern New England.
3. Train undergraduate and graduate students from UMass Boston and other institutions, as well as tribal community interns, in archaeological techniques, heritage preservation, Native American history, colonial studies, and collaborative research methods.
4. Improve archaeological fieldwork and interpretations with the addition of indigenous perspectives and participation as part of a deeply collaborative relationship.

Community and Scholarly Outcomes

Preservation of the 203-acre Hassanamesit Woods	Comprehensive study of historic Nipmuc farmstead
Field training for more than 100 university students	Six publications in journals and edited books
Research for 6 UMass Boston masters theses	Research for 1 UC-Berkeley Ph.D. dissertation
More than 20 presentations at professional and local meetings	

Community and Scholarly Outcomes

Extensive mapping and study of cultural features	College credits to two Eastern Pequot students
Field training for more than 100 university students	Seven publications in journals and edited books
Research for 16 UMass Boston masters theses	Paid internships for 10 Eastern Pequot members
Faculty participation in Civic Engagement Scholars Initiative, Cohort 1	
Native American scholarship from Society for American Archaeology	



“[There was] information that I could see...I asked myself, do I have this right, the permission of the ancestors...to dig into their past in this way?...A constant ongoing dialogue, that has been super super critical...Our story is a lot richer...”

– Rae Gould, Nipmuc

Reflecting on Collaborations, Sharing Experiences: 2003-Present

In November 2013, tribal leaders from the Nipmuc and Eastern Pequot communities came together with their university partners for the first time. They participated in a public dialogue, exchanged experiences, and celebrated the photography and artifact exhibit.



Photo Captions: [Left] Cheryl Holly, Rae Gould, Nipmuc Nation; Professor Stephen Mrozowski. [Above] Exhibit, displaying artifacts in cases and photos along walls. [Right] Katherine Sebastian Dring, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation; Professor Stephen Silliman.



“We would offer our traditional tobacco offering any time the earth was penetrated and say a prayer and blessing to Mother Earth...in that way, we would be honoring our tradition...It has been a rewarding experience for both of us but I think in order to get to this point it had to be a give and take, and we wanted to make sure our traditions and cultures were respected along the way.”

– Katherine Sebastian Dring, Eastern Pequot