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Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School

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Project Summary & Goals

The Eastern Pequot Archaeological Field School began in 2003 as a cooperative effort between Anthropology Professor Stephen Silliman and the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, a Native American community in southeastern Connecticut. It uses a six-credit summer archaeological field course to achieve four objectives:

1. Assist with locating historical cultural sites on the Eastern Pequot reservation, established in A.D. 1683, and provide historic preservation and archaeological services at low to no cost to this Native American community.

2. Train undergraduate and graduate students from UMass Boston and other institutions and tribal community interns in archaeological techniques, heritage preservation, Native American history, colonial studies, and collaborative research methods.

3. Improve archaeological fieldwork and interpretations with the addition of indigenous perspectives and participation as part of a deeply collaborative relationship.

4. Study Eastern Pequot house sites – using artifacts, animal bones, plant remains, architecture, landscape, historical documents, and oral history – to understand the persistence of this Native American community in the colonial world of southern New England.

References & Resources


Sources of Funding

National Science Foundation (2005-2008)
UMass Boston, various (2003-2011)

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Tribal interns Natasha Gambrell and Ashbow Sebastian screening for artifacts

Smoking pipe fragments (Photo by Heather Lowe)

Results

Discovery of numerous archaeological sites on the reservation, dating between 1740 and 1860

Extensive mapping of above- and below-ground features for academic study and land management needs of the community

Development of archaeological methods and publication protocols that are sensitive to community needs and cultural preferences

Ten UMass Boston M.A. theses in Historical Archaeology

Presentations at public and scholarly conferences

Major publications in archaeological journals

Participation of many Eastern Pequot tribal interns and volunteers, ranging in age from 16 to 85

One Eastern Pequot recipient of Society for American Archaeology Native American Scholarship

First college credit opportunity for two tribal community members

Tribal elder Bobby Sebastian blessing excavation with tobacco

Anna Hayden (UMass Boston graduate student) and tribal elder Norma Parrish