

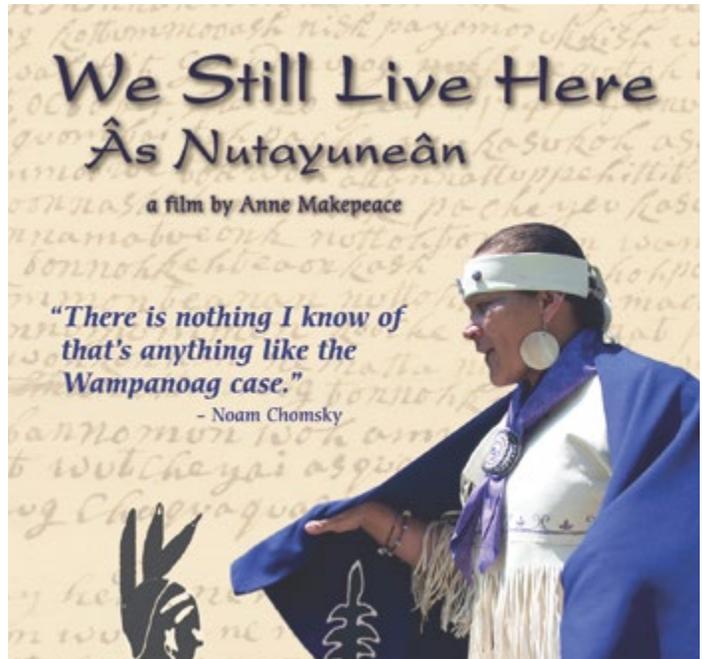
# EXPERT TO REVIVE NATIVE LANGUAGE

A NEW PROJECT to reclaim the Wampanoag language begins today. The language has not been spoken fluently for several generations, *writes our community editor, July 16, 1993.*

Project founder Jessie Little Doe Baird says she began researching the language after having a vision.

Originally an oral language, Wôpanâak is the first Native language to use an alphabetic system and written documents.

Wôpanâak is one of 40 languages of the Algonquian family, and one of only two Native languages left in the state, the other being the Nipmuc language. Prior to European contact and colonization, there were also the Pocumtuk and Mahican languages.



THE WÔPANÂAK Language Reclamation Project (WLRP) operates an immersion school called Mukayuhsak Weekuw for tribal children pre-K through second grade. It also offers elders and elementary after-school classes; three levels of Wôpanâak in the Mashpee High School for any student and continuing community classes.

WITHIN MASSACHUSETTS' borders are the ancestral homelands of four Indigenous nations: Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Pocumtuk, Mahican. However, colonial encroachment seized land and disrupted Indigenous ways of life. The largest groups remaining are the Aquinnah Wampanoag (Martha's Vineyard), Mashpee Wampanoag (Cape Cod), Herring Pond Wampanoag (south Plymouth); and the Nipmuc nation (central Mass.). These historic tribes live where they always have, trace direct kinship from pre-contact ancestors, and maintain traditional governments.

Mashpee and Aquinnah are now federally recognized tribes, having direct relationships with the Federal government. Herring Pond and Nipmuc are state recognized. These statutes afford tribes some ability to maintain intact communities after the destruction of colonial processes.