

## OCTOBER 7, 2009 TAH WORKSHOP NOTES

Present: John Daly, Michael Penney, Brian Morse, Kelly Davila, Sandy Gibson-Quigley, Sarah Kaye, Tim Corcoran, Ann Weeks, Tom Doughton, Landy Johnson, Nora Werme, Henry Zussman, Ed Belbin

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9:15-10:30 A.M. *Overview academic year programs and 2010 Summer Institute; discussion and presentation by Thomas Doughton of major issues in Indian America, including New England, in the twentieth century: sovereignty; autonomy; federal recognition; identity; cultural patrimony; language preservation; sports; "playing Indian"; and, popular culture*

- Introduction and overview of the day
- Nipmuc "myths"....the myth of a Nipmuc reservation, the myth of a Nipmuc language (created in the 1980's by a Nipmuc "wannabe")
- An overview of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—sovereignty, identity, federal recognition, changes in federal policy over the course of the century (particularly the efforts to force assimilation and tribal termination in the 1950's)
- Presence and persistence of communities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Indians in sports
- Mascots, etc.
- Stories about Indians by non Indians (sometimes imposters)
- Movies, etc. about Indians (with or without Indian actors)

### Sovereignty and Autonomy—the Nipmuc People

- A split between the Webster/Dudley and Grafton/Hassanamisco "tribes" killed federal recognition.
- (In fact there are questions as to whether there was such a thing as a "Nipmuc" tribe before the Europeans came. The Nipmuc (meaning "fresh water ones") were simply the inland tribe of the Massachusetts Indians)
- Lots of confusion that centers around the fact that the Europeans were confused about who was who among the native peoples from the beginning... related to the Euro-American propensity to create "tribes" based on town borders.....didn't see an overarching political/social identity among the native peoples
- When the issue of federal recognition came up there was opposition by the states, infighting among groups and confusion over aims
- At first the Nipmuc (and many other native groups) were looking toward economic development (an idea was even floated that they should buy a large parcel of land in a poor area for purposes of economic exploitation because of the limitations of federal and especially state laws on reservations—federal criminal law applies but many other laws don't—thus they could pay lower wages...etc.)
- The insertion of the casinos came a bit later...and made things even more complex...
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- Grey Owl, Long Lance, Asa Carter (a KKK member who wrote a book about a Cherokee child's growing up!) have both helped and hurt Indian identity

10:45-12 NOON *Presentation by Thomas Doughton on twentieth-century identity using Nipmuc experience as an example. We will be exploring three contemporary Nipmuc "myths" accepted by an uniformed general public as part of an ethnogenesis or attempts by Nipmuc to create a counter-*

*factual tribal history and identity. We will look at the notion of a Nipmuc “reservation” at the Cisco family property on Brigham Hill Road in Grafton when there was never any Nipmuc “reservation” in Grafton; in fact, a Nipmuc “reservation” at Grafton dates only from the 1940s. Next, we will consider attempts to “preserve” or “reclaim” a Nipmuc language’ in fact, the “Nipmuc language” was invented in the 1980s by an individual claiming to be a Nipmuc “medicine man” and “tribal elder” who, according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, could not substantiate any connection to any Native American communities. And, finally, we will be looking at entities created in the past decade calling themselves “the Nipmuc Indian Council at Natick” and “The historical Nipmuc tribe”[ <http://www.geocities.com/nipmucspace/>]; in fact, no such groups have ever previously been part of Native experience.*

*Advance readings to be discussed: Ann McMullen “Soapbox Discourse: Tribal History, Indian-White Relations, and Southeastern New England Powwows” The Public Historian 18(4):53-74; and, What's Wrong With This Picture?: Context, Conversion, Survival, and the Development of Regional Native Cultures and Pan-Indianism in Southeastern New England,” in Enduring Traditions: The Native Peoples of New England, ed. Laurie Weinstein, pp. 123-50. Westport CT: Bergin and Garvey. [Both at website]*

- Issues of ethnogenesis, autoethnogenesis
- Myth of Nipmuc language
- Ann McMullen’s readings will also be discussed
- Also look at Nipmuc Natick Council, Historic Nipmuc Tribe

**Myth of Hassanamisco reservation on Brigham Hill Road in Grafton** came about in the 1960’s when “Princess” Zara Cisco Brough (Sarah Cisco)

- The Nipmuc people dismissed her claim
- Newspapers accepted them uncritically (this raises the question of the way in which virtually all stories about Indians are published and venerated if they are from an “Indian” source—the older the person who makes the claims the more uncritically they are received. Something similar has happened in cases of alleged holocaust survivors)
- Zara/Sarah made claims that the land her family lived on in Grafton was a reservation..... it is true that she was legitimately connected with the Nipmuc people and was a member of a well known Nipmuc family---but most of the claims she made were pure fabrications.
- One claim she made was that her house was the oldest occupied building in new England—built after Nipmucs visited Plymouth in the 1620’s and decided to build a house in the English style.....(even though it was a 19<sup>th</sup> century style structure)...also there was no evidence that anyone lived at the Hassanamisco site before Eliot established a “praying town” there.
- Zara/Sarah created the myth that she was the hereditary “squaw-sachem” of the Nipmuc people.....but it has gained power through repetition over the years and has become a cherished myth of some who have attached themselves to the Nipmucs in recent years.....
- The purported Hassanamisco reservation can be found all over on line....yet it is entirely a myth.....
- One of the guiding principles Zara made for membership in the ‘tribe’ was based on pigmentation (i.e. people who “looked Indian”)....using this criterion some families were

split between those who could pass and those who couldn't....other—Non Nipmucs—were allowed in as “associate” members because they “looked Indian”....

- A “counter-history” was created that couldn't bear up to scrutiny....
- This would complicate moves to acquire federal recognition

This also raises the question, “Who is Indian?”—is it genetic? Is it a matter of belonging to a community of values, beliefs, etc.?

- There are all sorts of problems with people who have no connection whatsoever to a native community who claim to be Indians (usually based on “looking Indian”) and who become accepted spokespersons for Indian communities (by the non-Indian media)
- The people who have been conscious of their connection to an Indian community for generations already know who they are and mark those connections through long standing traditions.... (christenings, weddings, funerals, family gatherings, allocation of resources, mediation of disputes, and so on)
- Looking at the Anne McMullen readings—what criteria are there to determine reality based “mythologies” from those that are complete fakes? There are all sorts of historiographical problems raised here..... Whose perspective counts?
- The myth of the Nipmuc language and the identity of persons claiming to have leadership in the Nipmuc community (with no genealogical connection to anyone in the “real” community) was instrumental in derailing efforts to get federal recognition..... George “Little Turtle” Munyan created the language from 18<sup>th</sup> century Natick (Massachusetts) language sources..... 18<sup>th</sup> century English was carried over into 18<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts and brought into the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Mr. Munyan
- A “traditional” Nipmuc morning prayer was written by George Munyan and has been posted on numerous media sites....(see a related NPR article, “Keeping The Native Nipmuc Language Alive”—by Arun Rath)
- David White ( a disciple of “Little Turtle”) has been recorded by NPR saying this morning prayer.
- How does all this compare with the McMullen articles? Is it a legitimate permutation of a community's experience or is it a whole cloth fabrication—basically a lie?
- How can claims of legitimacy be challenged? If someone claims to be an Indian and has a language...etc. how can he/she be legitimately challenged.....
- The “Historic Nipmuc Tribe” ..... no demonstrated connection
- There is a stake in these identity issues—who is legitimate

12-12:45      LUNCH

12:45-2:00      Screening of the film “Sun, Moon, Feather” and discussion led by Thomas Doughton. As explained by the Cinema Guild: “This prize-winning musical comedy/documentary, blending documentary, musical theater and personal memoir, is about three Native American sisters growing up in Brooklyn during the 1930s and '40s. It features Lisa, Gloria and Muriel Miguel,

who have been performing their family stories professionally for more than a decade in a presentational style rich in humor and with an elemental power that recalls the spirit of American Indian myths. Directed by Bob Rosen and Jane Zipp 1989, color, 30 minutes.”

- Response to video—father was an Indian from Panama, mother was a Rappahannock Indian that lived in Brooklyn..... “Indianness” was expressed at powows....hunting dances and wolves..... “Daddy was a drunk” ..... some stereotypes + differing memories....
- Indians in unexpected places—Brooklyn in the 1930’s.....
- A sense of community and realness...

2:15 UNTIL 4:00

Lesson Plan Presentations by Ed Belbin, Sandy Gibson-Quigley

Ed Belbin presenting---since he doesn’t teach US history right now he has been applying what we are doing to his “Foundations of Identity” class (2 sections—religion, historiography)

- Questions, How do you record history? What do you put in and what do you take out?
- Using the Barre Historical Museum’s collection of Lakota artifacts—do they belong to all of us as a nation, or, should they be returned to the Lakota people for religious reasons?
- Discussions about political correctness can be rather heated in the class...how to deal with this?
- “What works and what doesn’t work?” (Tom).... It can be tough to get 9<sup>th</sup> graders to make the connections between history and identity....kids know that they should be “sensitive” (politically correct) and aren’t always sure about how to deal with the challenge of politically correct v historically correct (Westborough is an overwhelming “white” town)
- How to use primary sources....what about personal identities among the students (a girl who is turned off about being Wampanoag because of a bad experience at a pow-wow and who prefers to be an “Indian” whereas someone else prefers the opposite)
- What is the use of materials from the program? (comparative---articles about family identity—Francis Gary Powers son wanting to set the record straight, Japanese textbook portrayals of WW 2, false stories during Hurricane Katrina about atrocities in the Superdome, etc.)
- Hard to get kids to disagree with a text/teacher/other source. Good to use conflicting primary sources....

Sandy Gibson-Quigley

- A Lesson Plan for an advanced US History 1 (10<sup>th</sup> grade) on Indian Removal
- Class set up—small groups activities dealing with questions and reporting back
- Look at different options, complexities....
- List reasons for removal (and agreement to leave) from both Indian and white perspectives
- Refer to other incidents in American history involving relations between the dominant society and native peoples
- Methodology sometimes include active reading and discussion

- Use primary source documents to illustrate differing points of view
- Revisit the Removal (having done the above)
- Use a primary source cartoon of Andrew Jackson (titled “Andy Jackson—Benefactor of Native Americans) ask groups to give it their own title—why?
- A great resource is from “Center for Learning”

Responses/questions:

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