

PLIMOTH PLANTATION WORKSHOP

OCTOBER 27, 2007

In Attendance: Thomas Doughton, John Daly, Philip Hureaux, Richard Latham, Kelly Davila, Richard Small, Michael Penny, Andrea Bien, Jen Connors , Tim Gervais

Randy Joseph, the Director of the Wampanoag Indigenous Studies Program, (WISP), gave us an overview about how Plimoth Plantation has become a 'bi-cultural' historic museum.

We saw an orientation video about the relations between the two cultures in which the newly recovered Wampanoag (Massachusetts) language was spoken

We toured the Wampanoag Home-site and learned about the seasonal movements of the Wampanoag from their winter village to individual family sites during the warm season

In the wetu, we were asked to consider the relative values of our modern ways versus the "humbler" ways of the 17th century Wampanoags. It was asserted that native ways were generally superior to the newcomers' ways in that they (natives) lived more in tune with the environment, did not have a concept of land ownership, did not abuse the environment and did not exploit children as 'workers', among other things. These assertions led to a couple of pointed questions about the generalization that natives lived a more harmonious life than the newcomers (e.g. the Aztecs in Mexico) in the follow up Q&A with Randy Joseph after we got back to the education center.

Randy also gave a presentation about Thanksgiving, pointing out that the event in 1621 was an English harvest festival to which about 90 Wampanoag warriors arrived after hearing the Pilgrims firing their guns. Since the two groups had a treaty of mutual defense, there is good reason to infer that the Wampanoags came to find out whether their 'allies' were under attack. One myth exposed was the image of Pilgrims and Indians sitting down to a big Thanksgiving dinner together. Wampanoag women and children were not in attendance (only the warriors came). The event lasted several days and was spread throughout the village (no single place was large enough to accommodate all 150 or so participants).

After lunch, the group toured the Thanksgiving exhibit at the education center. The exhibit traced Thanksgiving from the actual 1621 English harvest festival through the various mutations that occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries until the present day.

John Daly