

●●● Wampanoag Tribe ●●●

● *What is the correct pronunciation of "Wampanoag?" What does it mean?*

Wampanoag means "easterners." Originally it was pronounced similar to WAWM-pah-NAW-ahg. But today, most Wampanoag people pronounce the name either wamp-a-NO-ag or WAMP-ah-nog ("wamp" rhymes with "stomp.")

● *Where do the Wampanoag Indians live?*

The Wampanoag Indians were original natives of [Massachusetts](#) and [Rhode Island](#). It was Wampanoag people who befriended the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock and brought them corn and turkey for the famous first Thanksgiving. Unfortunately, the relationship went downhill from there, and disease and British attacks killed most of the Wampanoag people. The surviving Wampanoags are still living in New England today.

● *How is the Wampanoag Nation organized?*

The Wampanoag tribe has its own **reservation** on Martha's Vineyard. Reservations are lands that belong to Indian tribes and are under their control. The Wampanoag tribe has its own government, laws, police, and other services, just like a small country. But the Wampanoag are also US citizens and must obey American law. There are about 300 members of the Wampanoag tribe, but many other people of Wampanoag descent live elsewhere in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

● *Were the Natick, Pokanoket, Nantucket, Chappaquiddick, Patuxet, and Massachusetts tribes part of the Wampanoag Nation?*

Sort of. All these tribes spoke the same language and had the same general culture, but their villages were **autonomous**. That means each band made its own political decisions. They didn't belong to a larger Wampanoag government like the [Iroquois](#) and other native confederacies. But the Pokanokets, Patuxets, Chappaquiddic, Naticks, and Nantuckets are collectively called Wampanoag today because of their shared culture and history.

🕒 ***What language do the Wampanoags speak?***

Wampanoag Indians all speak English today. In the past, they spoke their native **Wampanoag (Massachusetts) language**. Today, some Wampanoag people are trying to [revive](#) the language of their ancestors. If you'd like to learn a Wampanoag word, Wuneekeesuq (pronounced similar to wuh-nee-kee-suck) is a friendly greeting that means "Good day!" You can also see a Wampanoag picture glossary [here](#).

🕒 ***What was the Wampanoag culture like in the past? What is it like now?***

Here are the websites of the two main Wampanoag tribes today, the [Gay Head Wampanoag](#) and the [Mashpee Wampanoag](#). On their sites you can learn about the Wampanoag people past and present. You can also read simple articles about the Wampanoag Indians [here](#) and [here](#).

🕒 ***How do Wampanoag Indian children live, and what did they do in the past?***

They do the same things any children do--play with each other, go to school and help around the house. In the past, Indian kids had more chores and less time to play, just like early colonial children. But Wampanoag children did have [cornhusk dolls](#) and toys such as miniature bows and arrows and hand-held ball games. Like many Native Americans, Wampanoag mothers traditionally carried their babies in [cradleboards](#) on their backs--a custom which many American parents have [adopted](#) now.

🕒 ***What were men and women's roles in the Wampanoag tribe?***

Wampanoag men were hunters and sometimes went to war to protect their families. Wampanoag women were farmers and also did most of the child care and cooking. Both genders took part in storytelling, artwork and music, and traditional medicine. In the past, Wampanoag chiefs were always men, but today a Wampanoag woman can participate in government too.

🕒 ***What were Wampanoag homes like in the past?***

The Wampanoags didn't live in tepees. They lived in villages of small round houses called *wetus*, or **wigwams**. Here are some [pictures of a Wampanoag wetu and other wigwams](#). Each

Wampanoag village was built around a central square used for councils and ceremonies. Some villages were **palisaded** (surrounded with log walls for protection.) Today, Native Americans only build a wigwam for fun or to connect with their heritage, not for shelter. Most Wampanoags live in modern houses and apartment buildings, just like you.

🕒 What was Wampanoag clothing like? Did they wear feather headdresses and face paint?

Wampanoag women wore knee-length skirts. Wampanoag men wore [breechcloths with leggings](#). Neither women nor men had to wear shirts in the Wampanoag culture, but they would dress in deerskin mantles during cool weather. The Wampanoags also wore [moccasins](#) on their feet. Here is a [picture of Wampanoag clothing](#) and some photographs and links about [American Indian clothes](#) in general.

The Wampanoags didn't wear long headdresses like the [Sioux](#). Usually they wore a beaded [headband](#) with a feather or two in it. A Wampanoag chief might wear a headdress made of [feathers pointing straight up from a headband](#). Wampanoag women had long hair, but a man would often wear his hair in the [Mohawk](#) style or shave his head completely except for a **scalplock** (one long lock of hair on top of his head.) Wampanoag warriors also painted their faces, and sometimes decorated their bodies with [tribal tattoos](#).

Today, some Wampanoag people still have a traditional headband or moccasins, but they wear modern clothes like jeans instead of breechcloths... and they only wear feathers in their hair on special occasions like a dance.

🕒 What was Wampanoag transportation like in the days before cars? Did they paddle canoes?

Yes, the Wampanoag made dugout canoes by hollowing out huge trees. They used them for transportation and ocean fishing trips. Over land, the Wampanoag tribe used dogs as pack animals. (There were no horses in North America until colonists brought them over from Europe.) Today, of course, Wampanoag people also use cars... and non-native people also use canoes.

● ***What was Wampanoag food like in the days before supermarkets?***

Everyone in a Wampanoag family cooperated to gather food for the tribe. Women harvested corn, squash and beans. Men hunted for deer, turkeys, and small game and went fishing in their canoes. Wampanoag children collected other food like berries, nuts and herbs. Some traditional Wampanoag recipes included soup, cornbread, and stews.

● ***What were Wampanoag weapons and tools like?***

Wampanoag hunters and warriors used bows and arrows and heavy wooden clubs. Fishermen used nets and bone hooks.

● ***What are Wampanoag art and crafts like?***

The Wampanoag tribe was known for their [beadwork](#), [wood carvings](#), and [baskets](#). Here are some [pictures](#) of a Wampanoag basket being woven. Wampanoag artists were especially famous for crafting **wampum** out of white and purple shell beads. Wampum beads were traded as a kind of currency, but they were more culturally important as an art material. The [designs and pictures](#) on wampum belts often told a story or represented a person's family.

● ***What other Native Americans did the Wampanoag tribe interact with?***

The Wampanoag traded with all the other New England Indians, especially the [Mohican](#) and [Mohegan](#) tribes and the [Delaware Indians](#). The wampum beads made by the Wampanoag tribe were highly valued by other tribes. Sometimes the Wampanoag fought with the [Mohawks](#) and other or the [Iroquois Indians](#).

● ***What kinds of stories do the Wampanoags tell?***

There are lots of traditional Wampanoag legends and fairy tales. Storytelling is very important to Wampanoag Indian culture. Here's one [legend](#) about a Wampanoag giant.

● ***What about Wampanoag religion?***

Religions are too complicated and culturally sensitive to describe appropriately in only a few simple sentences, and we strongly want to avoid misleading anybody. You can visit this site to learn more about [Wampanoag mythology](#) or this site about [Native](#)

[American religion](#) in general.

🕒 ***Can you recommend a good book for me to read?***

You may enjoy [Children of the Morning Light](#), which is a wonderful collection of traditional legends retold by an Wampanoag elder. If you want to know more about Wampanoag culture and history, two interesting sources for kids are [Clambake](#) and [Wampanoag](#). Older readers may prefer [King Philip's War](#), the history of the conflict between colonists and Indians that nearly wiped out the Wampanoag people. You can also browse through our recommendations of [Native American books](#) in general.

🕒 ***How do I cite your website in my bibliography?***

You should ask your teacher for the format he or she wants you to use. Our names are Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis and the title of our site is Native Languages of the Americas. The site was first created in 1998 and last updated in 2009.

Thanks for your interest in the Wampanoag Indian people and their language!