



# Past Times

Published by The Little Compton Historical Society ~ Winter 2024-25

## Come to the Winter Exhibit!

November 30, 2024 ~ January 20, 2025

### International Traveling Exhibit Comes to Sakonnet

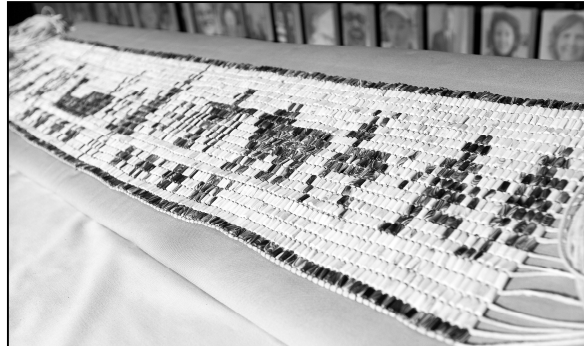
A traveling exhibit created by SmokeSygnals, the leading Native creative agency in the Northeast, will be on display at the Little Compton Historical Society this winter.

The exhibit, which has traveled throughout the United Kingdom and the American Northeast, tells the largely untold stories of Wampanoag Native America using images, ideas, and wampum by contemporary Wampanoag artists and educators. It also examines and celebrates the art, culture, and resilience of the Wampanoag Nation.

### Metacom's Lost Belt

The centerpiece of the exhibit is a magnificent new wampum belt, through which Wampanoag artists of today share their story and their creative aspirations for the future. For thousands of years, wampum belts have held cultural, sacred, and symbolic significance to the Wampanoag Nation. Made from the purple and white shells of the quahog and whelk, wampum beads embody the Wampanoag connection to the sea and to life itself. Each shell bead is imbued with memory and meaning by the maker, the belts becoming tapestries of art and tribal history.

This belt was truly a communal effort, as many Wampanoag artists and tribal members came together



WAMPUM  
Stories from the Shells  
of Native America

and contributed beads to complete it. It honors the Wampanoag leader Metacom (Philip), who was killed in August 1676, ending the war that bears his name. The wampum belt Metacom was wearing at the time of his death is believed to have been taken from his body. It was described by Benjamin Church and was in his possession before being sent to King Charles II as a spoil of war. This tribal treasure is of priceless historic, cultural, and spiritual value, and although it has been traced to England, it has never been found.

The new belt, to be displayed in Little Compton this winter, was created to generate interest in Metacom's lost belt and to hopefully lead to its location and ultimately its return to the Wampanoag people. The new belt was intentionally left unfinished and will be added to in the future as the story develops.

### Member's Opening Event – November 30

*Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America* will open at the Little Compton Historical Society on Saturday, November 30 with a reception from 4 to 7 PM for LCHS members and invited guests. It will remain on display through Martin Luther King Day. The exhibit will be open from 10 AM to 5 PM Tuesday through Sunday with the exception of December 24-26 and January 1. Please visit [littlecompton.org](http://littlecompton.org) for more information on the exhibit, the opening reception, and our regular operating hours. Admission to the exhibit is free to all.

### Contents

Lecture Series	Pages 4-5
Sakonnet History Project	Page 3
Annual Appeal	Page 7

SmokeSygnals  
NATIVE PRODUCTIONS

**President**

Steven Lubar

**Vice-President**

Jane Lorch

**Secretary**

Helen Richmond Webb

**Treasurer**

Bart Brownell

**Directors**

Rowan Acebes

Marc Anderson

Shelley Bowen

Fred Bridge

David Goodall

Juanita Goulart

George Kilborn

Richard Menoche

J. William Middendorf, II

Carolyn J. Montgomery

Christopher Rawson

Ashley Sparks

Mike Steers

Paul Suttell

Charles Truslow

Caroline Wilkie Wordell

**Executive Director**

Marjory O'Toole

**Program Manager**

Kristine Gagnon Aguiar

**Newsletter Designer**

Shelley Bowen

**Little Compton  
Historical Society**

**&  
Wilbur House Museum**

548 West Main Road

PO Box 577

Little Compton, RI 02837

(401) 635-4035

lchistory@littlecompton.org

www.littlecompton.org

**Winter Hours  
10 AM to 5 PM**

**Office  
Tues.-Fri.**

**Wampum Exhibit  
Tues.-Sun.  
Nov. 30-Jan. 20**

**Programs, Tours &  
Research by  
Appointment**

# WANTED

## AS GIFTS OR LOANS!

### Items with Little Compton Histories

For possible inclusion in our permanent collection. The Collections Committee will review each item.

### Obituaries, Funeral and Memorial Service Programs, Copies of Eulogies

Help us document the lives of our residents by sharing information about your loved ones with us.

### Objects & Stories Related to the Sakonnet People

Please contact [lchistory@littlecompton.org](mailto:lchistory@littlecompton.org)



LITTLE COMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# MUSEUM STORE SUNDAY®

## 12.01.24

## 10% OFF

**LCHS Museum Shop Items**

Offer does not include consignment items.

## Corporate Members

Local businesses play an important role in the preservation and presentation of Little Compton's history. Additional Corporate Members are always welcome. Please call 635-4035.

### SEASON SPONSORS

Briggs Beach

COTDesign

Sakonnet Farm & Stays

Sakonnet Garden

Sakonnet Tree, Inc.

Treaty Rock Farm

### EVENT SPONSORS

Antique Stove Hospital, Inc.

Arkins Construction, Inc.

Heath Farm

Katharine H. Leary, CPA

Lees Wine and Spirits

Sakonnet Plumbing & Heating

Sakonnet Point Club

The Sausage Guy

Small World Farm

Valcourt Heating

### CORPORATE MEMBERS

Able Engineering Inc

Amesbury Mowing, Inc.

Cantin Photography

Cotta & Associates

C.S. & M. Tele-Systems

Country and Coastal Properties, Inc.

Dennis Talbot Inc

Fall River Modern Printing, Inc.

Fern Acres Funeral Home

Goulart Petroleum

Hope Alpaca Farm LLC

Howland Company

Insidesign

Lapointe Insurance Services Inc

Madden Electric Company

Mataronas Lobster Company

Mr. Charles R Mackenzie, Genealogist

Partners Village Store LLC

Peckham's Greenhouse

Phil's Propane

Sakonnet Energy

Sakonnet Events, Inc.

Sakonnet Lobster Co.

Stephen's Masonry, Inc.

Studio by the Sea

Tyson Foods

Wishing Stone Farm

Wilbur's General Store, Inc.

# The Sakonnet History Project is Underway!

## Sakonnet Mishoon Launched

September 2024 brought the successful completion of the Historical Society's first artist's residency and the first public event of the Sakonnet History Project. Aquinnah Wampanoag artist Jonathan James-Perry led a month-long artist's residency to build a traditional Wampanoag dugout canoe, known as a mishoon, on the grounds of the Little Compton Historical Society. This was Jonathan's 49<sup>th</sup> mishoon project. Throughout the mishoon-making process Jonathan worked with a team of Native builders and paddlers including Andrew and Michael DeVido, Jared James, and Darius Coombs. It was Michael DeVido's first mishoon-making experience, and he was given the honor of lighting the first fire. Each of the craftsmen interacted with the public during a variety of public events, sharing their knowledge and traditions with both Native and non-native visitors.

On September 28, Jonathan and his team launched the Sakonnet Mishoon from Squant Rock on Sakonnet Point (Lloyd's Beach), a site of great significance for the Wampanoag people. After a private reconnecting ceremony, the mishoon entered the Sakonnet River to the cheers of well over 100 onlookers. This was the first time a Wampanoag mishoon has been launched from Sakonnet Point in well over 200 years, and its creation and launch is a very fitting start to the Historical Society's larger Sakonnet History Project. The finished mishoon will be on permanent display in our new outdoor exhibit sharing the history of the Sakonnet Wampanoag people. That exhibit will open on June 27, 2025.

The Sakonnet Mishoon artist's residency was generously funded by The Lodge of St. Andrew, Rhode Island Humanities, and Little Compton community members.

## A Multi-Year Effort

The Sakonnet History Project is a major, multiyear project that will produce a book, a permanent outdoor exhibit in a native plant garden, a two-year indoor special exhibit featuring historic and contemporary Wampanoag works of art and craft, and a variety of public programs exploring the history of the Sakonnet People from the beginning until the present day. A list of this winter's lectures is available on pages 4–5.



*Jonathan James-Perry, Darius Coombs, and Jared James paddle the Sakonnet Mishoon from Squant Rock to Sakonnet Harbor on September 28, 2024. Photo by Rich Castenson.*

Many of the project's key components will be shared with the public in 2025, an important year, marking the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both King Philip's War and the first attempt at English settlement in Sakonnet. In preparation for the Sakonnet History Project, the Historical Society has been reaching out to ask for the help of local Indigenous knowledge keepers, and artists to ensure that

our book, exhibits, and programs include the voices, traditions, and culture of Wampanoag and Narragansett peoples.

## Advisors, Artists & Essayists

One of the most important aspects of the Sakonnet History Project is the involvement of local Indigenous people in its planning and implementation.

Advisors Chief Earl Mills (Mashpee Wampanoag) and Linda Coombs (Aquinnah Wampanoag) are working with local garden designers Josie Richmond Arkins (Treaty Rock Farm) and John Gwynne (Sakonnet Gardens) to plan the native plant garden that will house our permanent outdoor Sakonnet history exhibit.

Wampanoag artists Kerri Helme (Mashpee Wampanoag), Jonathan James-Perry, Elizabeth James-Perry (Aquinnah Wampanoag), Leah Hopkins-Perry (Narragansett), Haley

*(Continued on page 6)*

# Winter Lectures

Free & Open to the Public

Visit [littlecompton.org](http://littlecompton.org) to pre-register for Zoom lectures.

All lectures begin at 7 PM.

## Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America

**Paula Peters (Mashpee Wampanoag), Co-founder of SmokeSignals**

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Little Compton Community Center and Zoom

Paula Peters will discuss the exhibit, *Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America*. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a magnificent new wampum belt, through which Wampanoag artists of today share their story and set out their creative aspirations for the future. The exhibit tells the story of Wampanoag Native America. The Wampanoag people have inhabited the northeastern United States for over 12,000 years. Wampanoags greeted the passengers of the Mayflower in 1620 and helped them survive, yet for almost 400 years, the story of the impact of that event and its aftermath on the Wampanoag Nation has been widely marginalized in the telling of American history. This exhibit explores that largely-untold story, using images, ideas, and wampum by contemporary Wampanoag artists and educators, and examines and celebrates the art, culture, and resilience of the Wampanoag Nation.

Paula Peters, founder of SmokeSignals, a Native production company, is a politically, socially, and culturally active member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. As an independent scholar and writer of Native, and particularly Wampanoag history, she is a producer of the traveling exhibit *"Our" Story: 400 Years of Wampanoag History* and is engaged in the Wampum Belt Project in search of the lost treasures of Metacom, including an effort to restore the art and tradition of wampum making among her people. She is the executive producer of the 2016 documentary *Mashpee Nine* and author of the companion book. She lives with her extended family in Mashpee and travels internationally to speak on the true Wampanoag story.



## Documenting 13,000+ Years in Little Compton through Community Engaged Archaeology

**Kevin Smith, Archaeologist, Osprey Heritage Consulting**

Zoom —Wednesday, January 22, 2025

In 2023, as part of the Sakonnet History Project, Kevin Smith partnered with the Little Compton Historical Society to study stone tools and ceramics in the Society's collections as well as those found by Little Compton residents. Nearly thirty people shared what they had found in order to gain a better understanding of their collections. In this talk, Kevin will share what we learned from working with the community and how it helps to illuminate 13,000+ years of life in what is today called Little Compton.

A museum professional for 40+ years, Kevin coordinated research and managed global collections at the Buffalo Museum of Science and at Brown University's Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology. He curated and co-curated 50+ exhibitions; has contributed to exhibits at the National Museum of Iceland; and is engaged in research projects in Canada and across the North Atlantic. He is currently a Research Associate with the Arctic Studies Center at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History and with the State University of New York at Albany's Department of Anthropology. He teaches part-time at Bridgewater State University and is a co-founder and partner at Osprey Heritage Consultants, LLC.

## Appreciation vs. Appropriation

**Silvermoon LaRose (Narragansett Niantic)**

Assistant Director at the Tomaquag Museum

Zoom—Wednesday, February 26, 2025

What is cultural appropriation? Why is cultural appropriation harmful? How can we show appreciation for other cultures without appropriating them? Join Silvermoon LaRose, Assistant Director at the Tomaquag Museum, for a presentation that delves deeper into the concerns associated with appropriation and how you can avoid appropriative practices.

Silvermoon Mars LaRose is a member of the Narragansett Tribe, devoted to her family, and always striving to be a good Auntie to all within her community. As the Assistant Director of the Tomaquag Museum, she is dedicated to the sharing of cultural education and the preservation of cultural belongings held in trust for future generations. Silvermoon has worked in tribal communities for over 20 years, serving in the areas of health and human services, education, and humanities. In 2022, Silvermoon participated in the Rhode Island Foundation's inaugural Equity Leadership Initiative cohort and now sits on its steering committee. As a public servant, Silvermoon serves on the Rhode Island State Council for the Arts, and as the secretary for the Charlestown Conservation Commission. Additionally, she is the vice chair for the Avenue Concept supporting local public art ecosystems. As an artist and educator, she hopes to foster Indigenous empowerment through education, community building, and the sharing of cultural knowledge and traditional arts. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, a minor in Justice Law and Society from the University of Rhode Island, and a partially completed Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling from Western Washington University.



## Sakonnet Mishoon Artist's Residency

**Jonathan James-Perry (Aquinnah Wampanoag)**

Artist in Residence at the Little Compton Historical Society

Zoom—Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Master mishoon maker Jonathan James-Perry (Aquinnah Wampanoag) joined us in an artist's residency this past September. He led a team of Wampanoag artisans and paddlers in the making of a Wampanoag mishoon (dugout canoe) at LCHS, which is located on the traditional homelands of the Sakonnet Wampanoag people. Jonathan and his team then conducted a Reconnecting Ceremony and launched the mishoon near Squant Rock, a sacred Wampanoag site, at Sakonnet Point, and paddled the mishoon on the Sakonnet River. In this talk, Jonathan will share his personal insights about the project.

Traditional singer, dancer, speaker and carver, Jonathan James-Perry is grounded in the traditions of his ocean-going ancestors. He considers designs by examining the raw materials closely, and draws his images from the grain, hues, and patina of wood, stone, and copper. Jonathan enjoys using the materials and knowledge handed down from his ancestors to express his understanding of the natural world as well as the changes over time since Creation. His mentors, like the late Nanepashemet (Tony Pollard) of the Wampanoag Nation, have taught him to observe and take special care when handling these materials, and breathing life into his pieces of art. Jonathan's work embodies the refined quality of those of his ancestors, while still drawing upon his experience in a contemporary society. His pieces reflect balance within the Natural World, incorporating stories, effigies, and symbology of Wampanoag traditions.



(Continued from page 3)

Peters (Mashpee Wampanoag), Ramona Peters (Mashpee Wampanoag), Marlene Lopez (Mashpee Wampanoag), Julia Marden (Aquinnah Wampanoag), Leah Llanes (Aquinnah Wampanoag), Jason Widdiss (Aquinnah Wampanoag), Robert Peters (Mashpee Wampanoag), Darius Coombs (Mashpee Wampanoag), Toodie Coombs (Mashpee Wampanoag), Silvermoon LaRose (Narragansett Niantic), Brooke Waldron (Seekonk Wampanoag), and Linda Coombs are working with us to share contemporary Native crafts and original art to illustrate our book, to be displayed in our indoor exhibit in conjunction with historic belongings, to be displayed as public art in our outdoor exhibit, and ultimately to be added to our permanent collection.

Many of these collaborators have also graciously agreed to write essays for us to be included in our book on the history of the Sakonnet Wampanoag people, including: Earl Mills, Darius Coombs, Jonathan James-Perry, Elizabeth James-Perry, Silvermoon LaRose, Ramona Peters, Kevin Smith, Linda Coombs, Melinda Green, and Ellie Page.

This list of talented scholars and culture keepers working with us to better understand the history of the Sakonnet Wampanoag people has grown significantly since we announced the project last year, and we hope it continues to grow.

## Learning from Community Collections

As part of the Sakonnet History Project we recently completed a town-wide analysis of several thousand Sakonnet belongings, stone and metal tools and ornaments, now in private local collections. Archaeologist Kevin Smith viewed each of these artifacts and has prepared a report that adds greatly to our understanding of the Sakonnet people during the last 13,000+ years. We have

also worked with Archaeologist Holly Herbster of the Public Archaeology Lab to investigate the homesites of the Nicholsons and the Mantons, two Afro-Indigenous families who lived in Little Compton in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Information from each of these studies will be shared in our book on Sakonnet history and in our two new exhibits.

## Save the Dates

In addition to attending the opening of our winter exhibit, *Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America* on November 30, we invite you to join us for the opening of our new Sakonnet exhibits and to celebrate the publication of our new book. Mark your calendars for two very special annual events. Our Exhibit Preview Party is scheduled for Friday,

June 27, 2025 from 6 to 8 PM. Tickets will go on sale early in June. Our Family Day celebration will take place the following day, Saturday, June 28 from noon to 4 PM. Family Day, as always, is free and open to the public.

## Support the Project

The Sakonnet History Project is one of the most significant and most expensive projects the Historical Society has under-

taken. We began our fundraising campaign for the project at this time last year and have been deeply encouraged by the community's response. Thanks to gifts and pledges from our neighbors and friends and a number of local foundations we are now only \$50,000 away from our fundraising goal. These funds are necessary over and above next year's usual operating budget. If you would like to help support this important work, please mail your gift to LCHS, PO Box 577, Little Compton, RI 02837 or give electronically on our website [littlecompton.org](http://littlecompton.org). You may also use the form on the facing page.



Original artwork by Mashpee Wampanoag artist Robert Peters interpreting the launch of the Sakonnet mishoon.



L I T T L E   C O M P T O N   H I S T O R I C A L   S O C I E T Y

## Annual Appeal 2024~2025

Dear Neighbors,

The success of any small, non-profit organization hinges on the support of its community. The Little Compton Historical Society is fortunate to serve a community that responds time and time again with generous financial support.

There are many ways to help us with the local history work we do: you can attend an event, visit our exhibits, share your stories and personal research, donate an object or a photograph to our collection, become a member, donate to a special project like the Sakonnet History Project, or, make an unrestricted gift to our Annual Appeal.

As we begin this year's Annual Appeal, we hope you will support us, perhaps for the very first time, perhaps as a continuation of decades of support. No gift is too small, and all are truly appreciated. Our current members and donors will receive an appeal letter in the mail shortly, but for those of you who are not yet involved in the Historical Society please consider making this the year you signal your support for well-researched, respectful local histories.

We remain grateful for the tremendous support we receive from the community year after year, and invite you once again to join us, and our 2000+ supporters, as we research, preserve, and share the history of Little Compton and Sakonnet.

Sincerely,

Steven Lubar  
President, Board of Directors

---

### I'd like to support the work of the Little Compton Historical Society!

Membership:    \$20 Individual \_\_\_\_\_    \$30 Family \_\_\_\_\_    \$75 Corporate \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Appeal Gift \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to the Sakonnet History Project \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Gifts may also be made electronically at [www.littlecompton.org](http://www.littlecompton.org).

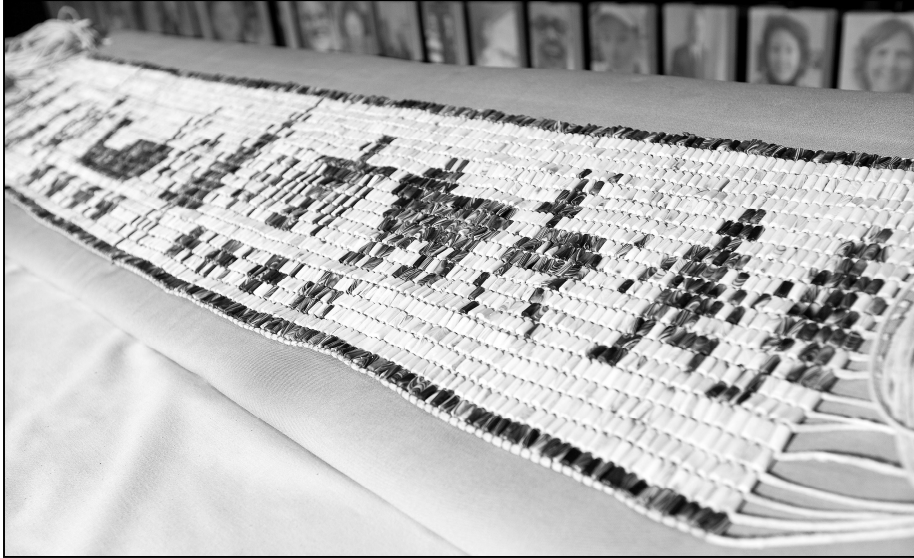
Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to LCHS, P.O. Box 577, Little Compton, RI 02837

# Members' Special Event



## Wampum Exhibit Opening

Saturday, November 30  
4~7 PM

Light Refreshments

Free to Members

RSVP:

[tinyurl.com/WampumSakonnet](https://tinyurl.com/WampumSakonnet)

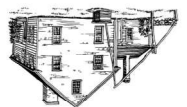
Winter Exhibit  
November 30, 2024 — January 20, 2025



Postal Customer

Return Service Requested

The Little Compton Historical Society  
PO Box 577  
Little Compton, RI 02837-0577



Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Little Compton RI  
Permit No. 30