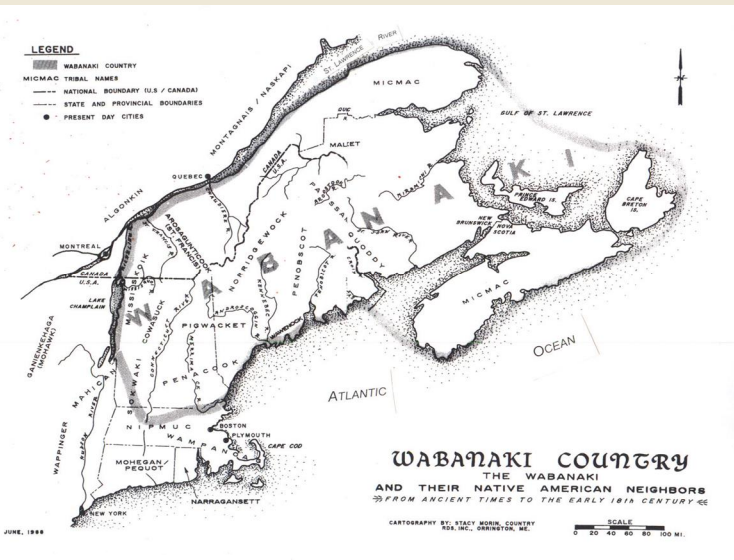


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First Nations Diplomacy Opens the Portsmouth Door:
Siquam
The 300th Anniversary of the 1713 Treaty of Portsmouth

“When we heard it was Peace between England and France we were very glad and hoped we should soon have a Peace here.” The English explained that “the Queen of Great Britain’s Arms were superior to those of the King of France and he had surrendered up Newfoundland and the Land on this side.” The members of the First Nations replied “The French never said anything to us about it and we wonder how they would give it away without asking us, God having at first placed us there and They having nothing to do to give it away.”

-- Terramangous, Wabanaki speaker at Casco Bay, July 18, 1713

The French had established a fort at Port Royal, in what is now Nova Scotia, Canada, in 1607. The English settled Plimouth, in what is now Massachusetts, in 1620; and Portsmouth in 1623. From that time on, their national rivalries and imperial intentions played out against the “First Nations” people who had inhabited the northeast North American coast for 10,000 years. In the years after the decimating epidemic of 1616-19, the First Nations of the four Maine coastal alliances and families had formed the Wabanaki Confederacy, the “people of the dawnland.” The expansion of English settlements, Wabanaki friendships with French missionaries and the English-French wars in Europe resulted in more than 100 years of intermittent English-Wabanaki conflict on the Northern New England frontier.



The regional influence of the Wabanaki nations (cartography by Stacy Miller Morin).

SEEKING PEACE IN THE DAWNLAND

Queen Anne’s War (1703-12) between England and France came to America in the form of European attempts to secure Wabanaki allegiance and the territory they controlled. Wabanaki-French raids terrorized the English, pushing them from their Maine settlements back towards Portsmouth. English attacks disrupted the First Nations’ livelihood.

The 1713 Treaty of Utrecht ending Queen Anne’s War in Europe attempted to set the French and English boundaries in the New World. It put the English in charge of coastal Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine and gave France control of the St. Lawrence River valley around Quebec. The land in between was Wabanaki territory and both France and England agreed to respect the other’s First Nations allies. The Wabanaki questioned how France and England could be talking about control of their ancestral land.

For there to be peace in the dawnland, a treaty between the English and the Wabanaki was necessary. The meeting in Portsmouth, July 11-14, 1713 was important for the First Nations diplomacy employed, the acknowledgement of a New Hampshire governing Council separate from Massachusetts and for the impact it had on opening the Portsmouth door to development as the commercial and military hub on the frontier.

“I have my land that I have not given, and will not be giving, to anyone. I wish always to be the master of it. I know its extent and when anyone wishes to come and live there, he will pay.”

-- Jesuit missionary Sebastien Rasles’ account of a Wabanaki speaker, Casco Bay, 1713