

King Philip's Ghost:
Race War and Remembrance in the
Nashoba Regional School District

By Timothy H. Castner

The gruesome image still has the power to shock. A grim reminder of what Thoreau termed *the Dark Age of New England*. The human head was impaled upon a pole and raised high above Plymouth. The townspeople had been meeting for a solemn Thanksgiving filled with prayers and sermons, celebrating the end of the most brutal and genocidal war in American history. The arrival and raising of the skull marked a symbolic high point of the festivities. Many years later the great Puritan minister, Cotton Mather, visited the site and removed the jaw bone from the then exposed skull, symbolically silencing the voice of a person long dead and dismembered. There the skull remained for decades, perhaps as long as forty years as suggested by historian Jill Lepore. Yet while his mortal remains went the way of all flesh, Metacom or King Philip, refused to be silenced. He haunts our landscape, our memories and our self-conception. How might we choose to live or remember differently if we paused to learn and listen?

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In June of 2013 residents of Bolton and members of the Nashoba Regional School District had two opportunities to ponder the question of the Native American heritage of the area. On June 9th at the Nashoba Regional Graduation Ceremony, Bolton resident and Nashoba Valedictorian, Alex Ablavsky questioned the continued use of the Chieftain and associated imagery, claiming that it was a disrespectful appropriation of another groups iconography which tarnished his experience at Nashoba. Just two weeks later, revelers at Bolton's 275th anniversary parade also witnessed the reluctance to face the Native American legacy in the area. Among the parade of dignitaries, local businesses and

organizations, marching bands, relatives of founding residents, and tributes to local farms, walked a twelve foot tall puppet of King Philip.¹ Metacom, as he was originally known, carried a tomahawk in one hand and a human scalp in the other. Parade emcee and Florence Sawyer Principal, Joel Bates, perhaps not knowing how to respond to the sight, quipped, “It is a good thing the real King Philip wasn’t that big or we would have lost King Philip’s War.” Regardless of our personal response to Alex’s comments or the mysterious reappearance of King Philip at the parade, both events should prompt us to inquire more deeply about the legacy of conflict and conquest in the Nashoba Region.

Some might question why it is important to dredge through such uncomfortable history when we should instead be focusing on the challenges of today or celebrating the accomplishments of our ancestors. Certainly both of those goals are important and laudable. At the same time, failing to confront the complexities of the past risks the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes. We also lose the opportunity to remove the blinders of the present and mature as individuals and a community. The great historian, Edmund Morgan, famously argued that American freedom cannot be understood outside of the context of American slavery. Likewise, American freedom cannot be understood outside the context of Native removal.

Throughout the Revolutionary Era Americans simultaneously adopted Native symbolism while defining themselves against the perceived savagery of Indians. One of the first British actions that prompted American resistance at the time of the American Revolution was the Proclamation of 1763 which established a line along the ridge of the Appalachian Mountains, blocking further American expansion west. The line also established a massive Native American reservation in an attempt to forestall further Native unrest such as had just occurred in Pontiac’s Rebellion. A decade later, patriots in Boston famously dressed up as Mohawk Indians as they dumped tea in Boston harbor. As the Revolutionary War broke out, fear of Native Americans was used to rally the New England militia in

preparation for major military victories at Bennington and then Saratoga. It was in this context that Americans first celebrated the centennial of King Philip's War. Reprints of accounts of King Philip's War were popular not just because it was the hundredth anniversary of the conflict, but because Mary Rowlandson and others could inspire Americans to fight against a new generation of "savages" that were seen as threatening American freedom.²

America's founding documents further reveal the attitude at the time. Even the Declaration of Independence listed among the grievances against the King, "He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction, of all ages, sexes and conditions." In an attempt to maintain control over the colonies, the King had unleashed a two-pronged strategy that infuriated colonial leaders. First, he offered freedom for enslaved Africans who would fight with the British. Second, he partnered with Native Americans who longed for assistance to help them preserve their homeland against continual American encroachment. As many have noted, both slaves and Native Americans would likely have been significantly better off had the Americans lost their bid for independence.

The story of cooperation and conflict between English settlers and Native residents in Central Massachusetts has roots long before Jefferson penned his famous declaration. For the Nashoba Regional School District the history began in 1643, just 13 years after the Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded in and around Boston. That year Showanon, (also known as Sholan or Nashacowam in many of the records) the sachem of the Nashaway, traveled from his village of Weshakim, located between the two Waushacum ponds in the present day community of Sterling, to Watertown to trade beaver pelts for a variety of English goods. Showanon struck up a conversation with the young fur trader, Thomas King, and invited him to establish a trucking house, or trading post, near the Nashaway village along the

² Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) 186-88.

Nashua River in present day Lancaster. At the time it no doubt seemed mutually advantageous. The Nashaway would gain easier access to English trade goods and a potential ally against neighboring rival tribes. King would get an outpost on the frontier closer to the valuable trade with Native Americans. That same year King and Henry Symonds travelled west and built their trucking house near the intersection of two Native American trails and close to the Nashaway village at the confluence of the North and South Branch of the Nashua River.

The Nashaway or Nashowog were a relatively weak group of about seven hundred Natives living in villages in Sterling, Lancaster, and Princeton. While some historians believe the Nashaway were a branch of the Pennacook, an Eastern Abenaki people primarily living in Northern New England, the majority believe them to be part of the Nipmuc who had an important alliance with the Massachusetts to the east. Either way, they lived near the border of often hostile and stronger Native Communities to the south, west, and north. Like most Eastern Woodland people they practiced a seasonal lifeway; spending time in the spring and fall near their corn fields and moving to other locations for fishing and hunting sites. Misunderstanding these seasonal patterns, many English believed that the Natives had no permanent settlements and had not improved the land to assert legal ownership. As historian David Jaffee expressed the pattern, "Despite their itinerancy, the Nashaways of Nipmuc country occupied permanent villages, traveled through a well-defined region adjacent to their settlements, and held an attachment to the locality."³

Soon thereafter King, along with some associates, signed a deed to purchase an eighty square mile plantation for twenty pounds from the Nashaway. The original plantation included all of the present day towns of Lancaster, Bolton, Berlin, and Clinton, and portions of Sterling, Harvard, and Hudson. The final size of the area turned out to be smaller as the Southeast corner had already been granted to the town of Marlborough. Although the record of the deed is lost, it was reaffirmed in later

³ David Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History & Memory, 1630-1860*. (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999) 38.

deeds and included an important qualification. “The English agreed not to molest the natives in their fishing, hunting, or planting, places.”⁴ That exclusion points to a fundamental tension between Native and English conceptions of land ownership and land use. For the Nashaway, and other tribes, property was held in common by the village and rights to it were held by the sachem in consultation with the whole community. Ownership meant the right to use fields, fishing places, village sites, and hunting and berry picking grounds within a defined area. Furthermore the use of specific places was often assigned by the sachem on an annual basis based on the needs of each family. As a result, there was no sense of permanent inalienable property rights in an individual. When Natives “sold” land they were inviting the English to join them in living within their tribal territories. The English, however, believed that they had purchased permanent control over the lands and the right to exclude others from it. Soon the guarantees of traditional fishing, hunting, and planting places were ignored as the English worked to transform the landscape into settled villages with clear boundaries such as they had known in Old England.⁵

The establishment of the trading post and the new English settlement of Nashaway brought the Nipmuc into a new economic relationship with one another and the broader world. Older exchanges based on reciprocity and gift giving were replaced with new patterns. Instead of fur being harvested based on current need, it was now harvested for its potential return in the emerging mercantilist economy. Soon even the trading post at Nashaway was not far enough West to access beaver pelts. Eventually the beaver would be driven to extinction in the state to meet the ever increasing market demand. Likewise wampum was revolutionized by Dutch merchants into a new medium of exchange,

⁴ Abijah P. Marvin, *History of the Town of Lancaster, Massachusetts: From the First Settlement to the Present Time, 1643-1879*. (Lancaster, MA: Town of Lancaster, 1879) 38.

⁵ For a fuller discussion of divergent Native and English conceptions of land ownership and land use see Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*. (New York, Viking, 2001) 188-93, and William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. (New York, Hill and Wang, 1983) 54-81.

and the Natives were drawn further into the Atlantic economy and further from their traditional life-ways.

The next year Showanon and Wassmego from Quaboag (Brookfield), along with several other Massachusetts sachems, presented themselves to John Winthrop and the General Court in Boston to formalize the political relationship between themselves and the Mass Bay colony. The Nashaway, like other weaker tribes in Southern New England, were harassed by attacks from the Mohegans and Narragansetts who had designs on their territory. Lacking the population or military resources to defend themselves they turned toward the English for help. The sachems in a declaration of dependence, “placed themselves, their subjects, and their lands under the jurisdiction of the English colony, ‘to be governed & protected by them according to their just lawes & orders, so farr as we shalbee made capable of understanding them.’”⁶ The new relationship was formalized through the exchange of gifts including wampum, cloth, and sack, a variety of wine. In addition, religious officials instructed them in the Ten Commandments, and the chiefs agreed to abide by their principles. According to Winthrop at the end of the meeting the natives “took leave and went away very joyful.”⁷ Seeking more powerful allies was nothing new for Showanon. He had previously formed an alliance with the Penacook for protection against the Mohegan. Further, he needed to provide a steady stream of gifts to members of his village in order to cement his position as sachem. No record exists as to whether Showanon understood that the nature of his new alliance with the English might be qualitatively different from all previous alliances. It is also unclear whether he could anticipate how the English would interpret placing the Nashaway lands under the jurisdiction of the English colony.

Over the next several years two developments further transformed the nature of the relationship between the Nashaway tribe and the English settlers. First, an increasing number of white settlers arrived at the Nashua River, and despite some fits and starts, formed the core of what would be

⁶ Jaffee 41.

⁷ Henry Stedman Nourse, *Early Records of Lancaster, 1643-1725*. (Clinton, MA: W. J. Coulter, 1884),11.

the new community of Lancaster. Second, a concerted effort was begun to convert Natives, including the Nashaway to Christianity. The missionary efforts were led by John Eliot and Daniel Gookin, who were spurred by criticism in England to launch a full scale evangelistic drive. Eliot taught himself Algonquian, began preaching to Natives in 1646 and by 1648 had extended his ministry to the Nashaway, making four separate preaching trips that year. At the close of that year Eliot informed Edward Winslow in a letter that "Showanon . . . doth embrace the Gospel and pray unto God."⁸ Having found encouragement and success in his missionary endeavors among the Nashaway, Eliot was committed to protecting and expanding his influence in the area.⁹

The missionary impulse, however, was not without its coercive elements. The Massachusetts General Court in November of 1645 passed a series of laws designed to promote Christianity and suppress traditional Native beliefs and practices. The first of these was a decree on blasphemy that subjected violators to the death penalty. The practice of "powwowing" was banned, thus making traditional Native American religious ceremonies illegal. Further, attendance at Sunday services, thanksgivings, and fast day sermons was made compulsory for all Natives. Additional laws required these decrees to be read each year to Native communities. Soon steps were taken to impose English culture on Natives with the hopes that conversion to Christianity would soon follow. Puritan leaders justified these laws as helping Natives benefit from the Gospel and claimed that since belief was not made compulsory they were not violating the consciences of the Natives. At first the Massachusetts government had no ability to enforce these laws in Nipmuc country. Within a generation the government would develop that power, setting the stage for significant conflict and confrontation.¹⁰

⁸ Cited in Dennis A. Connole, *The Indians of Nipmuck Country in Southern New England, 1630-1750: A Historical Geography*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2007) 94.

⁹ For a more complete account of John Eliot and his missionary efforts see Neal Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The "Praying Indians" of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan., 1974), pp. 27-54. <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

¹⁰ Connole, 89-90.

An important crisis arose in 1654, the year after the colony had formally recognized Lancaster as a town. Showanon died, and a struggle for power emerged among the Nashaway. On one side, representing those Nashaway who wanted to resist further integration with the English, was Shoshanim. He was known as Sam to the English and their reports described him as a drunkard, morally corrupt, and unfriendly to English interests. The other claimant was Matthew, who sought to continue Showanon's policy of accommodation with the English and was seen as a potential convert to Christianity. Fearing to lose their inroads with the Nashaway, the General Court sent John Eliot and Increase Nowell to try and influence the outcome of the deliberations. They were instructed to go ". . . by way of perswasion and counsel, not by compulsion, to prevayle with them for the choice of such a one as may be most fitt." After the visit, Eliot and Nowell described their trip as providing "a good service to the countrie."¹¹ In the end, the English had their way and Matthew was chosen as the next sachem, although it is unclear whether the intervention influenced the outcome of the debate. No doubt, the Nashaway still depended upon the protection of the English and their trade with them. At the same time, Shoshanim and his supporters now had an additional grudge against the English, resenting their meddling in the internal deliberation of the Nashaway.

Meanwhile, the development of the new town of Lancaster proceeded apace. To meet the requirements of the General Court, Joseph Rowlandson and his wife, Mary (White) Rowlandson, arrived to take up ministerial duties in 1654. John Prescott, who had acquired King's trading post in 1645, continued to trade profitably and diversified his holdings by building both a grist mill and a saw mill by 1657. That same year, he sold the trading post to John Tinker, who conducted the fur trade with natives from both Lancaster and Groton. Based on the taxes he paid, Tinker seems to have done well in the trading business; nevertheless, within two years he sold his interests to Simon Willard, who had controlled much of the trade along the Merrimack River. The consolidation of trading houses and

¹¹ Citations and summary follows Jaffee, 55.

decline of readily available beaver put increasing financial and social pressure on the remaining Nashaway.

The traders operating in Lancaster seemed more concerned with making a rapid profit, and not with following colonial laws regarding trade with Natives or ensuring that they maintained fair trading practices. Many traders were whipped or fined for illegally selling alcohol or firearms to the natives. Others, including influential town proprietors such as Stephen Day, were reprimanded for defrauding Natives in their dealings. In the 1660s, the situation worsened dramatically as the beaver population in central Massachusetts collapsed due to over trapping. Now with longer supply lines and having become used to trading for English manufactured goods, the Nashaway were in an untenable position. In addition, a decrease in the price of beaver furs in London further hurt the economic fortunes of Nipmuc trappers. Traders such as Simon Willard provided credit for the natives to purchase textiles, knives, guns, kettles, and liquor. Their accounts were to be settled with furs later in the season. As early as 1658, courts began awarding traders tracts of native land in exchange for nonpayment of bills at trading houses. Other Nashaway, including the chief Matthew, sold off parcels to raise needed revenue. Increased proximity and changing economic fortunes contributed to greater stress between the two communities.¹²

Tensions were further exacerbated by conflict between the Mohawk and the Nashaway. When Showanon swore allegiance to the English, he believed that he would receive protection in case of invasion. The Mohawks, seeking to expand their influence in the fur trade, launched a series of attacks against Algonquians and the Abenaki of Western New England. As the campaign intensified, the Nashaway invoked their alliance with the English and sought protection. The only response from the government was agreement to slightly increase the sale of powder and shot to the natives. As the 1660s wore on, the pace of attacks quickened and major assaults were led against Squakeag in the Connecticut

¹² Jaffee, 56-8.

River Valley and Pocumtuck, near present-day Deerfield. Still, despite significant Nashaway casualties, the English remained unwilling to provide substantial military aid. After a 1669 siege of a Mohawk village ended in failure, the Nashaway were greatly diminished in number, perhaps only fifteen families remained, and were increasingly disillusioned with their erstwhile English allies.

The decline of the Nashaway population mirrored the trends in the region as a whole. Throughout the seventeenth century, the Native population of New England suffered a major demographic collapse. From a high of about 140,000 in 1600, the population plummeted to only 10,000 in 1675. A wave of virgin soil epidemics actually preceded English settlement, with smallpox and other highly contagious diseases transferred by English traders and fishermen. The early settlers at Plymouth and Boston encountered an already diminished population and apparently abandoned lands. Wars such as the Pequot war further diminished the Native populations. Periodic disease outbreaks continued to decimate the people until many smaller tribes were forced to merge and recombine.

Relations between the English and Nashaway took a marked turn for the worse in 1673 when Matthew, the sachem, died. This time, Shoshanim (Sam) was able to take leadership of the band. His grievances against the English had not diminished since the English intervened to help block his ascension to sachem nearly twenty years earlier. The next year, Daniel Gookin and John Eliot traveled westward, seeking to expand the number of praying towns in Massachusetts. Praying towns were communities where Christian Indians lived in the style of the English, wearing English clothes, practicing English-style agriculture under the supervision of a trained native minister. Many natives resented these communities as an attempt to culturally extinguish their native ways. The English also benefitted from the praying town system, much as Americans later benefitted from reservations and the Dawes Act, since confining Natives to the boundaries of villages freed up substantially more land for white settlement. Indeed, at the same time that Eliot sought to expand the network of Praying Towns, the General Court was asserting greater control over land in the Commonwealth and claiming that Natives

had no right to land that had not been specifically granted to them by the General Court. In essence, the message was, convert, and relocate to a Praying Town, or you will lose everything. As Dennis Connole summarized the results, “It did not take long before the Indians began to equate the religious movement in the colony with the scheme concocted by the Puritan leaders to seize all unoccupied or unimproved lands, which would prohibit the tribes from ever utilizing the territory in the future.”¹³ It appears that some of the Nashaway were interested in forming a praying village, but under Shoshanim’s leadership, neither Nashaway nor the nearby village of Weshakim in what is now Sterling, joined. The following year, Shoshanim led the Nashaway to form a loose alliance with Metacom, helping to launch the most terrible war in American history.

Such an extended survey of events leading up to King Philip’s War is important, because it demonstrates that the conflict was not inevitable. Anglo settlers and Native Americans had lived in relative harmony near frontier settlements for a long time. Fifty years of peace at Plymouth bears this out. Furthermore, there were few major incidents between the actual residents of Lancaster and the Nashaway. However, a new and more aggressive policy of land encroachment by political elites in Boston provoked the response from Nipmuc and other tribes. The tribes themselves were often bitterly divided between pro-English and anti-English factions. Even small differences in the attitude of whites toward Natives or greater respect for Native land rights might have prevented the conflict. The Natives were truly caught between a rock and a hard place. They could seek to further accommodate themselves to English religion and life ways, but only at the risk of abandoning all of their traditional culture, getting swallowed up in an expanding English society and facing gradual dispossession and land loss. On the other hand, they could take up armed resistance to preserve a traditional homeland and life-ways or even expel the English from the New World. Such a strategy was a long shot and ultimately would backfire by hastening the elimination Native life-ways and spark a genocidal war. Left with no

¹³ See Connole, 117-21

good choices, individuals, clans, villages, and tribes sought to make the best of a no-win situation. Older sachems often counseled restraint and bided their time while younger braves chafed at the humiliations and longed to strike back at the English threat.¹⁴

Metacom's thinking at the beginning of the war is best explained in an account that John Easton wrote of a conversation with the Wampanoag sachem in 1675. According to Metacom, his father and his tribe had always treated the English well, but that good will was not reciprocated. He specifically accused the English of cheating Natives in land sales, denying Indians justice in the courts, failing to fence in livestock which damaged the crops of Native villages, and indiscriminately selling alcohol to Natives, leading to alcoholism and worse. On a more personal level, Metacom accused the English of poisoning his brother, Wamsutta. In the face of cultural loss, land loss, and repeated humiliations, Metacom saw no choice but to organize Natives to resist their feared final destruction at the hands of the English, his outreach to the Nipmuc turned out to be crucial to his overall strategy and the course of the war.¹⁵

Recounting the full story of King Philip's War lies well beyond the scope of this essay and readers are advised to look elsewhere for a complete account. The war broke out along the South coast of Massachusetts when Metacom's warriors attacked the town of Swansea. Tensions had flared over the murder of Sassamon, a Harvard educated translator and advisor to Metacom who had warned the English about planned attacks. When the English hung several of Philip's warriors for the alleged murder, the tinder ignited for the growing conflagration. In early August, Nipmuc and Nashaway warriors participated in an ambush of English soldiers and an all-out assault on the town of Brookfield. At the end of the month the Nashaway launched an attack on Lancaster, led by Monoco — or "One-eyed Joe" — that resulted in the death of seven or eight residents. Townspeople reorganized several houses into better defended garrisons to protect against further incursions. Southern New England succumbed

¹⁴ See Connole 181-82.

¹⁵ <http://02c3d27.netsolhost.com/educators/wampanoag/html/w-metacm.htm>

to panic and the nearby praying village of Nashobah, located in the present-day town of Littleton, was emptied. Its inhabitants were sent first to Concord and then forced to spend the winter in internment camps on Deer Island, lacking adequate food and blankets. By the next spring, half had died of hunger or cold.

Fear of Native Americans led to drastic actions far from the Nashobah village. Near the south coast of Rhode Island, the forces of the United Colonies led a coordinated assault on the Great Swamp of the Narragansetts. Up to that point, the Narragansetts had carefully maintained their neutrality, although there were reports of some Narragansett warriors among Philips forces, some Wampanoag women and children had sought refuge with them, and there were persistent rumors that the Narragansett planned to join Philip for his attacks in the spring. The United Colonies feared the wealth and power of the Narragansetts and sought to keep them out of the war with a preemptive attack. The Great Swamp included a palisaded fort containing hundreds of wigwams and upwards of three to four thousand Narragansetts, chiefly women and children seeking shelter from the horror of the war, but perhaps as many as 1,000 warriors. The bitter cold which froze the swamp, a howling blizzard, and an Indian scout aided the colonial army in approaching the site undetected. After waging a fierce firefight around the fort, some colonial soldiers gained entrance through an opening in the palisade, eventually setting fire to the wigwams and then slaughtering the women and children as they fled the fire. As many as six hundred natives were killed and three hundred captured in an assault that the Narragansetts remember as an unprovoked massacre of innocents, much as we remember Pearl Harbor or 9/11. The soldiers destroyed all of the food stores of the Narragansetts, not even taking enough to feed themselves as they retreated from the swamp. Left without food, defense, and many of their people, the surviving Naragansetts scattered. Many ultimately joined the Nipmuc encampment at Mount Wachusett. While prior to the attack the Naragansetts had sought to maintain their neutrality, they

were now spoiling for revenge and desperate for food supplies. Native warriors began planning for a second attack on Lancaster.

Back in Massachusetts Bay, it was a winter of fear and waiting. Seeking to learn the plans of the Natives, several Christian Indians from Deer Island were sent out as spies to see what could be learned. One Christian Indian, by the name of James Quanapohit, learned from Monoco of the planned assaults on Lancaster, Groton, Marlborough, Sudbury, and Medfield and informed Major Gookin in Cambridge of the impending assaults. Colonial authorities took no concrete action in response primarily because they distrusted the word of an Indian. The failure to respond adequately, based on clear intelligence, doomed the town to destruction. Soon, Lancaster sent Reverend Joseph Rowlandson and his brother-in-law, Henry Kerley, to beg for reinforcements. A second spy arrived at Gookin's house warning that the assault on Lancaster was planned for the next day, and Gookin hurriedly dispatched orders for reinforcements to be sent from Concord and Marlborough, but none arrived in time to avert the disaster.

The most famous eye witness account of the attack was penned by the minister's wife, Mary Rowlandson. It would go on to become a major best seller and help to launch the genre of the Captivity Narrative. Her account begins at dawn on February 20, 1676, with Native warriors attacking the village and torching the garrison houses. The motivation for the assault remains as unexplained as the rising of the sun that morning. There is no history, memory, or attempt to understand the broader context. The Rowlandsons had lived in the frontier community of Lancaster for over twenty years prior to the attack. No doubt, they had numerous interactions and relationships with the Nashaway. As previously noted many had converted to Christianity or at least were friendly with it. Gookin and Eliot would have met with Joseph Rowlandson and coordinated with him on continuing missionary strategies in the area. For Mary Rowlandson, that prior history is erased, as she focused solely on the attack and its aftermath. Mary Rowlandson's choice of language clearly delineates between good and evil in the attack. The

Lancastrian victims are referred to as “Christians,” “sheep,” and “Friends and Relations.” Natives attackers are referred to as “barbarous enemies,” “wolves,” and “hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting, and insulting.” In Rowlandson’s account, the attackers went beyond killing and capturing and sought to strip the English of their culture and undo their transformation of the countryside. Victims were stripped of their clothing, and their livestock were slaughtered and roasted. “Horses, Cattle, Sheep, Swine, Calves, Lambs, Roasting Pigs, and Fowls” were both eaten and wasted. Within several weeks, Lancaster was abandoned and its buildings burned by Natives. Groton likewise was attacked and deserted, as the English slowly withdrew towards the coast.

Yet even as they continued the string of victories, the Natives were already losing the war. Now significantly outnumbered by the English, the supply of available warriors dwindled further with each “success.” The failure to destroy Sudbury, together with more effective defensive measures adopted by the English, convinced many Nipmuc leaders that the war could not be won and they needed to sue for peace. New strategies of guerilla warfare pursued by fighters such as Benjamin Church exploited the low supplies of Natives and forced many of the scattered communities to surrender. When English troops could not locate Native enemies, they burned their crops in a successful effort to starve them into submission. As the spring progressed, captives such as Mary Rowlandson were redeemed. Metacom was killed in the summer and Shoshanim and other Nipmuc leaders, One-eyed Joe and Jethro, were captured in Dover, New Hampshire along with about two hundred followers.¹⁶ Despite their pleas for mercy, they were hung on Boston Common on September 22, 1676. Their wives and children were sold into slavery in the West Indies. The once proud Nipmuc had been reduced to three beleaguered groups, the community at Chabanakongkomun near Webster Lake, the Wabaquasset village near Woodstock, Connecticut, and Hassanamesit in Grafton. Today the two-and-a-half-acre reservation at Hassanamesit is all that is left of Nipmuc tribal landholdings.

¹⁶ Accounts differ as to whether One-eyed Joe was captured at that time, later, or turned himself in of his own accord.

Lancaster was not the only district town to suffer from King Philip's War. Natives attacked and destroyed the Wheeler garrison house on Wattaquodock Hill in Bolton, which was still part of Lancaster at the time. Richard Wheeler, Jonas Fairbanks, and John Fairbanks were all killed in the assault. The first white settlers of Stow were Matthew Boon and John Kettell. Boon had supposedly purchased significant land in the area for a jackknife. Around the time of the attack on Lancaster, Boon had abandoned his cabin with his family. When he returned to gather his possessions, he, his son, and a friend were all attacked and killed on Sudbury Road. Lake Boon commemorates his history in the area. John Kettell lived in a three hundred-acre farm "near Nashaway." Kettell fled to Rowlandson's garrison that fateful February. Most of the Kettell family escaped the attack, but Elizabeth Kettell, his wife, was captured and ultimately ransomed along with Mary Rowlandson.¹⁷

For the English residents of Lancaster, it would be a long time before they were ready to return and rebuild. Even if threats from local Natives had been eliminated, isolated frontier communities would be a favorite target of the French and allied Natives. Indeed many refugees from King Philip's War made their way to Quebec, nursing grudges against the English and eager to attack those who had displaced them from their lands. It would take until 1681 for seventeen to eighteen families to return. The Rowlandson family decided to move on to Wethersfield, Connecticut, safer from marauding Indians. Likewise the Kettells, of Stow retreated to the relative safety of Salem, Massachusetts.

During King William's War, there were scattered attacks on frontier settlements. In 1692, Peter Joslin returned from a day in the fields to discover his family killed by Native attackers. In late 1697, despite the formal end of the war in Europe, Lancaster was attacked again. The minister, John Whiting, was killed along with twenty five others. In addition, five residents were captured and two garrison houses were destroyed. Peace lasted for just five brief years before Queen Anne's War broke out.

¹⁷ Ethel B. Childs, *History of Stow: Tercentenary Edition*. (Stow, MA: Stow Historical Society Publishing Company, 1983.) 1-2.

Lancaster again fell under attack in 1704. Natives assaulted all six garrisons, but defensive efforts held off the invaders until colonial reinforcements arrived. Native attackers burned the Meeting House before retreating. During a second attack, later in the year, a sentry mistakenly fired upon the minister, Andrew Gardner, and the town lost its third minister in thirty years as a result of frontier warfare.

By the time of Dummer's War, in 1722, the nature of the conflict had changed markedly. Lancaster was now led by a third generation of settlers such as Josiah and Samuel Willard and John White. They were highly sought out by Dummer for their experience fighting Natives on the frontier. Now the goal was simply to remove all natives from the frontier. Their instructions from Lieutenant Governor Dummer were, "You must Kill, Take, and destroy to the utmost of your power all the Enemy Indians you can meet with in your March, and Search for their Corn, destroying all you can." In addition, bounties and land grants were awarded for each Indian scalp brought back from the campaign. One hundred pounds were awarded for male scalps twelve and older, while female scalps and children only garnered half price.¹⁸ Bounties were put on humans just as bounties were placed for wolves, mountain lions, and other feared animals of the wilderness. Soon John White from Lancaster joined John Lovewell in a campaign against Indians whose sole purpose was to return with as many scalps as possible. That mission ended in disaster, with two thirds of the English killed; subsequent campaigns to bring revenge also failed, but the Natives had suffered even more heavily and soon sued for peace.

The events of King Philip's War had set in motion a chain of events that solidified the idea of Natives as barbaric and outside the circle of compassion and concern. The saying "the only good Indian is a dead Indian" epitomized this attitude and would be expressed in various ways over time by Americans, from politicians to soldiers to writers. Frank Baum, the author of *The Wizard of Oz* series, once editorialized that the remaining Natives should be exterminated from the country. The King Philip

¹⁸ Quotation cited in Jaffee, 95.

puppet in the Bolton parade reflected this view of Natives as larger than life savages who scalped and terrorized innocents. Within this tradition, the Natives had to be removed, civilized, or eliminated to allow for the flowering of white, Christian civilization. At the same time, there has often been a counter narrative within American history that identifies Natives as Noble Savages, with character that we should emulate. In recent years this view has been seen most fully in popular films such as *Dances with Wolves*, *Pocahontas*, and *Avatar*. But the celebration of King Philip began much earlier. In the early nineteenth century popular novelists such as Washington Irving and James Fennimore Cooper wrote accounts of King Philip's War that celebrated Philip as a great warrior and even as the George Washington of his people.¹⁹ It was likely this romanticized view of Natives that encouraged Nashoba Regional to choose the Chieftain as its mascot. Unfortunately, both of these views avoid the ambiguities of history and allow us to create an image of the past that fits our ideologies or worldviews instead of the messy reality.

The central focus of this essay considers the idea of remembrance of historical events and how that is enacted or reenacted in the life of the present. As we know from debates about the Enola Gay, Columbus Day, and the Civil War, and the meaning of September 11th, history and memory are often in tension with one another. In his great 1879 history of Lancaster, Reverend Abijah P. Marvin claims twenty five to thirty families of Native Americans were living within the boundaries of Lancaster and "in league with, or under the domination of Philip." (103) Many nineteenth century accounts of the war in effect describe Philip as the evil mastermind of events, bringing natives under their sway. As a rhetorical trick it is convenient, because it absolves readers of questioning whether the actions of early settlers may have created motivation for them to join Metacom's rebellion. Marvin does not explain the origins of the war or the motivations of the attack on Lancaster. In his description of Shoshanim, the Nashaway leader, he merely says, the he "became estranged, and was ready to listen to the machinations of king

¹⁹ Lepore, 195-6.

Philip.” (101) Marvin describes a multipronged attack led personally by Philip and made up of “fifteen hundred warriors of the Wampanoag, Narragansett and Nipmuc tribes.” At the end of his discussion, Marvin has an extended passage on the fate of the Nashaway that is worth quoting at length.

“The fate of the Nashua Indians cannot be read without a feeling of sadness. For though there is no proof that the fathers of the town ever violated their agreement with the natives, or treated them unjustly, yet there is something painful in the thought that the first occupants of these plains, hills and forests were involved in a contest, by the arts of Philip, which led to their death, or dispersion. Some were killed in Philip’s war; some were sold into slavery with other Indians; some were dealt with as malefactors; and the rest abandoned the homes of their childhood, and the graves of their fathers. Some joined the Nipmucks and other Indians, to the number of two hundred and fifty fighting men besides women and children. They fled westward, were overtaken beyond Westfield, and many of them were slain or captured. More than two hundred crossed the Hudson below Albany and became incorporated with a tribe of Indians in that vicinity. Another part of the tribe took their way eastward to the right bank of the Piscataqua, where they were surprised by the troops, and those who had been engaged in the war were separated from the rest, taken to Boston, and sold into perpetual slavery in the West Indies. Shoshanim and several other leaders were executed, a fate which they preferred, doubtless to banishment and servitude. Those Indians who escaped capture took refuge among the Pennecook, and nevermore returned, unless as stragglers, to revisit the scenes of childhood, and drop a tear over a mother’s grave.”²⁰

Marvin’s empathy for the Natives is clear, but several questions remain unanswered. Did he feel similar empathy for the Sioux and Nez Perce, who in the 1870s had similarly been removed from their lands in the West? Would the Nashaway have indicted the town leaders for their gradual usurpation of tribal lands, alcohol sales, and use of debt from the trading posts to acquire further land? If the Nashaway did in fact disperse, is there a spokesperson to retell their side of the story? Even without a spokesperson, the suffering and displacement is clear as the Nashaway became refugees from their ancestral homeland.

The most impressive spectacle of remembrance came in the Lancaster Pageant of 1912. The pageant was a massive undertaking with over 400 participants and 4,000 spectators gathered on the

²⁰ Rev. Abijah Marvin, *The History of Town of Lancaster: From the First Settlement to the Present Time*. (Lancaster, MA: Published by the Town, 1879) 113-14.



town green on the Fourth of July. The spectacle was divided into a prologue and four historical scenes. The first two scenes, The Settlement of Lancaster 1650 and The Massacre by the Indians of 1676 are important for this essay. For the settlement, the text of the program describes friendly

Indians entering the scene and being particularly interested in the food and guns of the colonists. It then describes the signing of the deed for the Nashaway plantation for which the Indians were compensated with “money, two bullocks, and a jug of rum.” The property transfer is followed by feasting and drinking.²¹ According to the program, “The younger Indians begin a dance,--around their camp-fire, and , as it becomes more and more savage, John Eliot advances from the woods and reproves the red men for such riotous behavior. The Indians form a group with the settlers, and a second Psalm is sung.” The description is presented without irony or sarcasm. The Nashaway are described as “red men,” characterized as “savage” and “riotous.” But with the entry of the Christian missionary peace is restored and the two cultures literally join together in harmony in praise of God.

In episode three similar characterizations are continued. Sholan is described as “the good chief” and Sagamore Sam as hostile.” In the aftermath of the attack, the destruction and abandonment of Lancaster is described with the text concluding, “For about three years ‘the wolves and savages resumed their sovereignty along the Nashua.” Just as in Mary Rowlandson’s account two hundred and fifty years

²¹ Richard Sears, *Pageant Exhibition Panel 09 - The Purchase of Land*, July 4, 1912, Lancaster, MA. Courtesy of the Thayer Memorial Library. < <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:rj430p84v>> Last accessed July 21, 2015.



earlier, Natives are again described as “savages” and grouped with wolves. As is evident from the picture below local residents dressed in “red face” and portrayed the Natives in the attack. The names of participants who dressed up as male and female Indians is a veritable who’s who of Lancaster families, including long-

time residents, relatives of selectmen, people who have roads named after their families, and even one, Everett Hugh Minigan, who just six years later who perish on the fields of France in World War I. Now his name is carved into the World War I monument and flagpole, forever overlooking the green and the place where he helped reenact the attack on Lancaster.²²

In fairness to the town, the planners and participants of the event, the early twentieth century was not a particularly enlightened period in American race relations. Some historians have gone so far as to describe it as the low point in race relations in all of American history. African Americans were subjected to the indignities of the Jim Crow system and faced lynching if they challenged the system. Theodore Roosevelt was encouraging Anglo-Saxon parents to have more children to prevent the country from being overrun by immigrants. The eugenics movement and scientific racism was gaining ground and 1912 saw the election of Woodrow Wilson as president. He would make history by segregating the Federal Government. Indeed many progressives saw segregation as a positive reform movement that would lessen racial conflict by permanently separating the races. Clearly it would take remarkably

²² Richard Sears, *Pageant Exhibition Panel 11 - The Nashaway's Attack*, July 4, 1912, Lancaster, MA. Courtesy of the Thayer Memorial Library. <<https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:rj430p633>> Last accessed July 21, 2015.

insight to question the “heroic” actions of town founders or the racial assumptions so prevalent in the early twentieth century.

It is unclear exactly how Nashoba Regional High School got its name and how Chieftains became the mascot. Town Reports indicate the existence of the Nashoba Regional School District as early as 1951. Formed in response to the state passage of a law encouraging the formation of regional school districts in 1949, it would be 10 years before all three member towns supported the building of a regional high school. Neither the district nor any of the three town clerk’s offices have copies of the minutes of the early school committee meetings and there is no record of how the name was reached. During the 1960-61 school year a student planning committee was formed for the purpose of establishing the dress code, mascot, school colors, and other matters. The committee was made up of twenty four students — one boy and one girl for each incoming grade from each town. Again, no records exist of the deliberations of the group. Several members are still in town and as you might expect their memories of committee meetings that took place over fifty years ago are vague at best. No one could recall whether other mascots were considered, or what the rationale for selecting chieftains was. One participant noted that the adults who were leading the meeting seemed to be directing the students towards predetermined conclusions. If so, it would likely be impossible to determine what the first superintendent, Chris Patrinos, and other school leaders were thinking when they chose the chieftain mascot. There is perhaps no way to judge the racial attitudes that informed that decision as well. The Bolton Citizen News twice reported favorably on minstrel shows that were being performed in Bolton in the mid-1950s. It is possible that the revival of the often racially offensive minstrel shows was inspired by the movie *White Christmas*, which was released the previous year and included a song filled with nostalgia for the minstrel shows of old. It hardly seems fair to blame Bolton for following a theme from a major Hollywood movie.

Perhaps the best opportunity to understand the view of Native Americans that was held at the beginning of the district would be to explore some of the formal statements made at the Lancaster Tercentenary celebration in 1953 by local religious and political leaders. Reverend F. L. Weis, the recently retired minister of the First Church of Lancaster, had an interesting approach to the area's legacy of conflict with Native Americans. In describing the early white settlement of the area, Weis' description contradicted itself. "Though there was not then a single habitation and the whole countryside consisted of open fields and virgin forest. . ." If there was not a single habitation, then where did the Native Americans live? If there were open fields then, who had cleared them? If there was virgin forest, then how had Native Americans gotten their firewood, or made their wetus, or hunted game? Weiss went on to claim that, "land was to be had for the taking; farms for the labor of breaking the soil, homesites for the choosing and clearing; and within a stone's throw enough lumber for a cabin or a home for the cutting." Would the local Nashaway have agreed with that description? Hadn't they provided a lease that retained many of their rights?

In the next paragraph he does acknowledge the existence of a local Natives, "When they arrived they found their Indian neighbors - friendly and useful to them for the first quarter century, for the natives provided the settlers with fresh fish and game from the ever plentiful supply, while the settlers were breaking the ground and building their homes." The Natives are valued based on their usefulness and friendliness to the whites. But in the very next sentence they are described as "savage men." Later, in describing King Philip's War, there is no effort to provide any context as to why natives might have been angered or sought to retain portions of their ancestral homeland. "Our troubles began with a sudden and barbarous massacre of eight persons at the North village in August, 1675." And then, "Next February, the red men again struck savagely. . ." ²³ Over two hundred and seventy years after Mary

²³ Historical Sketch of Lancaster Delivered by Rev. F. L. Weis at Opening Program of the Town's Tercentenary, June 23 Clinton Item Vol 69 No. 282 page 1

Rowlandson wrote her narrative, official accounts of the war were still being presented without context and without any attempt to provide the Native American perspective.

The address by local congressman Philip J. Philbin even more strongly extolled the virtues of the early settlers while eschewing nuance and insisting on the need to recover those characteristics to promote American world dominance.

“These early settlers dauntlessly faced the primitive dangers that lurked in this wilderness. They assiduously cleared the virgin forests and industriously tilled the rich soil of the lovely valley of the Nashua River and its undulating hills and intervals. They endured the rigors and hardships of frontier life. They suffered bloody massacres by savage Indian tribes that inhabited the area. Their little village was sacked and burned several times, their meager possessions carried away, their wives, children, and neighbors slaughtered in cold blood or kidnapped by the merciless Indians and taken to remote places.”

Lest anyone doubt the innocence of the settlers and evil of the Natives, Philbin went on to claim, “First it is well to remember that they were primarily motivated by absolutely unselfish purpose.” Further, the two themes that characterized their lives were, “belief in the Almighty and the resolution always to worship and revere Him, and secondly, determination to secure freedom in all its import — independence of the mind, dignity of the individual, fellowship of the spirit and all the graces and benefits of free government and free civilization which untrammelled and unfettered human beings seem able to achieve.” The language and fears of the early Cold War were evident in his language and no more fully than when taking inspiration from the early settlers. Philbin declared,

“we shall surely go forward, expanding in knowledge and power, and that the roots of our institutions will strike deeper into the affections of the people, and that through the united efforts of the East and the West, the North and the South, blended into one sublime word 'America,' our primacy will be established and everywhere acknowledged, and that in the future, as in this hour, our chief glory will be that wisdom, justice, and mercy will preside over us and the destiny of the great republic.”²⁴

²⁴ June 27th Clinton Item 60 no 287, page 1 and 2 Congressman Philip J. Philbin

Both Weis and Philbin's addresses shared the characteristic that Historian Patricia Limerick found so common in writing and reflection on the American West. "It was second nature to see misfortune as the doings of an outside force, preying on innocence and vulnerability, refusing to play by the rules of fairness. By assigning responsibility elsewhere, one eliminated the need to consider one's one participation on courting misfortune."²⁵

The original yearbook included an image of a chieftain in a full "western style" headdress and was titled Otyokwa. According to the year book, the name was "Adopted from the Mohawk Indian Tribe." "Otyokwa (O-te-ok-wa) means 'A Group or Body of Persons Forming A Single Fellowship.' This Title Is Appropriate Because We Have Indeed Formed A Strong Fellowship at Nashoba Regional High School."²⁶ In addition to the image, which didn't fit the local native culture, the choice of a Mohawk word seems odd. The Mohawk were from Eastern New York and did not have a presence in Central Massachusetts. Indeed the decision by the Mohawk to stay out of King Philip's War may have been the only reason that the New England settlements survived the war. At the same time, the attitude seems respectful toward Native Americans, and reflected a desire for the school to have the type of unity associated with Native tribes. Clearly with students from three disparate and occasionally rival towns, that desire for unity was important and needed.

To better understand the Native American perspective of these events, I arranged to meet with Walter Vickers who served as the chief of the Nipmuc at the Hassaneseemit Reservation in Grafton from 1979 to 2013. According to Vickers, the Nashaway were part of the Nipmuc Nation, but that they were scattered and lost during the war with "no current contact with any of the families." Asked what he thought students should know about Nipmuc history and heritage, he said that they should know, "the truth" and that there have been a lot of lies about natives in the text books. On the question of King

²⁵ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987) 47.

²⁶ Nashoba Regional High School, 1961-62 yearbook. Capitalization preserved from original.

Philip's War he said "we had to retaliate; we had enough." Chief Vickers particularly noted the frequent thefts of native corn supplies carried out by white settlers. When asked about the King Philip puppet in the parade, and the use of chieftain as the school mascot, his answers were mixed. Chief Vickers objects to caricatured and stereotyped views of Native Americans and therefore found the King Philip puppet in the parade objectionable. At the same time, he does not object to the use of Native American symbols as mascots, just so long as it is done respectfully. For him, mascots such as Chieftains, Warriors and even Tomahawks are acceptable, but names like Red Men or Red Skins cross the line. He has previously written a letter approving of the continued use of Nipmuc Regional as the name of the school district in Mendon and Upton. Vickers also does not mind the use of western style headdresses as symbols of eastern tribes. He himself owns a western style feather bonnet and an Iroquoian headdress; despite years of research, he still has not been able to discover an example of "authentic" Nipmuc head gear. Vickers did note that not all members of his tribe share his opinion and that about 50 percent have greater concerns about the use of Native American symbols as mascots.

Chief Vickers' charge to tell the truth is of course a difficult one. What does it mean to tell the truth about these events, and what do we do if there are different interpretations of the truth? Another one of Chief Vickers' admonitions is helpful here: "Repeat the story as they said it." When we allow the authentic voices and stories to be heard, and listen with the heart, then new understandings, insight and empathy can be reached.²⁷ The difficulty of applying this principle with the Nashaway is that they are lost as a people, scattered by the horrors of war, executed, or enslaved. No known descendants exist to preserve their oral traditions and cultural memories of the past. One is reminded of the conclusion of Russell Bourne in his history of King Philip's War, "What we did inherit from King Philip's War was an

²⁷ Chief Walter Vickers, interview by author, Northborough, Massachusetts, 24 January, 2014.

ineluctable sense of guilt. Wandering the river valleys and inland shores, we ask where the people have gone, knowing all the while. Their arrow pierces our heart.”²⁸



The places and monuments of the tribe and war, however, remain. Perhaps in visiting them additional insight can be reached. The Great Swamp Fight Monument in South Kingston, Rhode Island, is not listed on any of the tourist brochures for the area. Only a determined searcher who knows what he is looking for will find the place. Contemporary visitors are still struck by the eeriness of the location. Surrounded by the Great Swamp Wildlife Refuge, it is a large red maple swamp, managed for wildlife and hunting. A one-lane woods road is built up over the

surrounding wetlands leading eventually to the site of the massacre and monument. Swamp oak, holly, and the occasional white pine and white cedar accompany the red maple along the path. The monument is set upon a small rise, where tall pitch pines mark the drier sandy soil in the midst of the swamp. The main plaque has been covered with what appears to be letters in the Cherokee script carved on top of the original text from 1906. A small button of Russell Means, the late Native American activist was left on the monument, and there was evidence of past and future camp fires and discarded flasks in the vicinity of the monument. The monument says “Great Swamp Fight,” if the ruthless slaughter of women and children can be called a fight. What the Society of Colonial Wars was so eager to memorialize in 1906, we now just want to forget. Just as we often forget that acts of brutality in one place often lead to retaliatory acts of brutality elsewhere. But only by confronting the facts of the

²⁸ Russell Bourne, *The Red King's Rebellion: Racial Politics in New England 1675-1678*. (New York: Atheneum, 1990) 246.

as we often forget that acts of brutality in one place often lead to retaliatory acts of brutality elsewhere. But only by confronting the fact of the massacre and the desire to memorialize it a century ago can we begin to understand the horror of the past.

Despite the efforts by Cotton Mather and many others to silence Metacom, his legacy and



memory cannot be so easily erased.

What was once Philip's stronghold on Mount Hope in modern day Bristol Rhode Island is now part of a large estate owned by Brown University. Obviously concerned with security, no trespassing signs blanket the roads and a solitary sign directs visitors to the main office to visit the

"historical sites." The signs don't indicate what those sites are. Only after knocking on several locked doors did I locate the main office and receive permission to visit the sites. The visitor log revealed that I was the first person to make the trip in over a month. Following the directions on the map, I crossed the

chain, passed the no trespassing sign and approached Metacom's Seat. A natural seat in a large quartz outcropping the location was easily defended and if cleared of trees would have provided a sweeping view of Mount Hope Bay. Visitors



had left had left a variety of mementos in the seat; some pine branches, a conch shell, many ears of

Indian corn, and some wound straw. All signs that they have not forgotten, and that they return to remember and honor his legacy. A small trail led up to the top of the outcropping. The view through the trees was impressive across the bay toward Fall River, Massachusetts. The massive Brayton Point coal-fired power plant mars the view and aptly symbolizes the contradictions of the civilization that displaced



the Pokanaketts. In the summer of 2013, climate

change activists sought to get arrested at Brayton

Point to call attention to the lasting damage to the

planet by our addiction to coal fired electricity.

Opposite the trail to Metacom's seat another path

led down into the woods toward the bay. After

following it for a bit, another even less marked path

veered off to the right into a cedar swamp. Such

groves were held sacred by natives and are still used

for religious ceremonies. Today more than just the

white man has invaded this site. Oriental

bittersweet, originally imported as an ornamental

plant, has become one of the most invasive species in the northeast. Massive vines overspread the cedars slowly smothering many of them to death, a further insult added to the many indignities inherent in this story.

Down the road from the King Philip's seat is one final destination. I was instructed to park by the dumpster and walk up the road. When I reached a turn in the road I was to go around the chain-linked fence barring the way, ignore the sign about the guard dog on duty and continue to the memorial stone in the woods. According to the stone—about 150 feet from that spot— having been betrayed by Indians aligned with the English, Metacom was attacked by Benjamin Church and killed, there in the Mirey?

Swamp. A small trail led toward the west south west, the direction indicated by the memorial. I paced off one hundred and fifty feet and stopped by a small rock with a stream in the distance.



What would they say if we could bring all of them back to this spot, or to King Philip's seat, or Rowlandson Rock, or Redemption Rock? If Metacom, Showanon, Shoshanim, and Weetamoo²⁹ revisited us and were joined by Thomas King, John Eliot, Mary Rowlandson, Matthew Boon, and Everett Minigan,

how would they want us to remember? What would they think of the King Philip puppet in the Bolton parade, or the controversy over the continuing use of the chieftain mascot? How should our iconography and public ceremonies mark this genocidal conflict on both sides? There is a refreshing honesty to the first seal of the Nashoba Regional School District. The white settler holding a gun stands next to his defended garrison house. He looks across the river toward a teepee, (again western style, not the wetus or round houses of the eastern woodland people. The sun sets in the west over the mountains, except Mount Wachusett is a lone monadnock with no twin peak as shown in the image. Perhaps the sun is rising in the east over the twin Vaughn hills. An Indian is pushing a canoe into the water on the far side of the river. The images remain unclear. Is the settler right to be on guard against a potential attack, or is he belligerently pushing the Nashaway farther and farther from their home ground? The questions are turned back on the reader. What do you see? What is the truth within this

²⁹ Weetamoo was the chief or Squaw Sachem of the Pacasset Wampanoags. She was reluctantly drawn into King Philip's War and then died in the conflict.

horrific history? How do we best remember with respect and honor? What additional seeking for truth and reconciliation should we pursue? Or would we prefer to simply forget?



