



# The Wabanaki Confederacy

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## Early History

The Wabanaki Confederacy was officially formed in the late 17th century when five indigenous groups came together: Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqey, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki.

Originally, the five nations united in response to the Iroquois raids. The confederacy was formed to keep cohesive military and political organization. After 1680, the group turned their collective attention towards the English and their colonies.



# 1680

## Treaty of Casco - 1680

Signifying the first major political move made by the newly formed group, the Treaty of Casco was signed in 1680 between the warring English and Wabanaki Confederacy. The English promised to respect the sovereignty of the Atlantic region and the peoples therein. As a sign of good faith, the confederacy likewise promised to respect the British colonies in Maine and New Hampshire. This treaty was later broken by the English, claiming that the above points were 'unclear.'

## The Peace and Friendship Treaty - 1725 - 1780

The series of major treaties signed between the British crown and the Wabanaki Confederacy outlined military peace and sovereignty of the Wabanaki peoples. For context, the Mi'kmaq people were at war with the British in what is now Nova Scotia for some 85 years. A collection of the more significant treaties, (11 total), signed between 1760 and 1761 signified an end to that ongoing conflict. Determined to not leave room for ambiguity, given the aforementioned treaty had been broken by the English, the Wabanaki confederacy strived for clarity in these documents, clarifying sovereignty of 'land,' and 'peoples.'

## Treaties

## Structure

The government itself was formed of a council of elected 'Sakoms,' whose mandate was to represent their respective groups and talk rather than rule.

Decisions were made through consensus between the speakers, often derived through debate.

There has been no time in history that the council or confederacy has had a single seat or single position so that no one group had more power than another. The only exception is when one member of the council is to address another political group, this person is titled the 'Grand Chief.'

## Modern Day

The modern day confederacy was revived in 1993 by the Passamaquoddy who re-lit the sacred fire in Maine.

Since then, the group has worked to reclaim ancestral lands outlined in old treaties. Additionally, the confederacy has also worked in the preservation of land from destructive projects like strip mining, clear cutting forests, and river decimation.

The current Grand Chief is Ron Tremblay from the Wolstaquey people.

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## References

<https://canadaehx.com/2020/11/21/the-wabanaki-confederacy>

<https://www.wabanakicollection.com/>

\*All images from the Wabanaki Collection

**The Wabanaki Collection:** home to curated and reviewed "resources that support enhanced relationships between all the peoples of Eastern Canada and Northeastern United States."



