

Session Two

Reflections on the April 18 webinar: "Who Are the Abenaki?: Past, Present and Future"

I thought it was a bit of an uneven performance, but I did learn some things, and enjoyed some of the stories.

Because of my auditory processing difficulties, I do not process spoken works quickly enough to keep up with some conversations. I also don't understand words I'm not familiar with if I don't see them visually. And songs are totally incomprehensible to me, since I can't process words and music at the same time.

All that said, I tried to follow along, and I took some notes. Here are some random gleanings of phrases and stories that appealed to me:

- "We walk in two worlds" – how well I know that experience, since I have been forced to (try to) learn the neurotypical way of doing things, since they don't seem inclined to learn mine. This was Chief Don Stevens's answer when asked if the Abenaki had been Christianized. In other words, "Yes and no" – they learned the Christian ways but they also retained their own culture.
- "water holds the memories of our people"
- "we never left our homelands"
- "water is the breast milk of Mother Earth"
- "What we do to Mother Earth we do to ourselves."
- the curse of Brunswick Springs
- "we don't die, we transition to the spirit world"
- the 7 directions of life (I think he gave 4):
 - conceived
 - start life immersed in water, given a heart to remember all mothers that came before us
 - baptized by water as we enter this world
 - the winds blow air and life into us
- Aln8ba [ahl num bah] = Abenaki, also human being {plural Alb8bak}
- Aln8b8dwa = speak Abenaki {Aln8b8dwa? = do you speak Abenaki?}
- "we do not have dominion over the land, we are the stewards of the land"
- "we are newcomers and can learn from the animals who were here before us; Mother Earth will be here when we are gone from the scene"
- "ours is a culture of reciprocity; if you want something, you must give something"
- example: the Corn Mother and the creation of the Three Sisters

There were three sisters, and the first had children who were crying from hunger. She went to the Creator for assistance. She agreed to give up her life so her children could eat. Her husband accepted her wish, and buried her in a mound, where he went to weep. He came back and where his tears had fallen, there grew maize and tobacco, gifts from the Corn Mother. The maize would have her hair, which would turn black when it is time to harvest.

When the second sister died, she wished to be buried near her sister, and she became the beans that would entwine with the cornstalks. The third sister was also buried there, and became the squash with prickly leaves to keep out the pests, and to shade the ground.

As yet unanswered (from Session One)

- What do the Mohicans and the Inkas have in common?
- Was bringing Christianity to the Americans a pretext for taking land, or a sincere desire to bring them religion?