**AS WE TELL OUR STORIES**
**Produced, Written & Directed by Kenneth A. Simon**
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OPEN

NARRATOR: Gambling ... land claims ... sovereignty ...

Connecticut's Native Americans have high visibility and growing influence -- often engaged in controversial issues.

It wasn't long ago that many Connecticut residents assumed the state's native people to be extinct. Today their history continues to be distorted by myth and stereotype.

Connecticut's natives have always been here, struggling for more than 350 years with assimilation, racism and economic stress.

Behind today's headlines are stories of culture, of identity, and of fortitude.

TITLE: AS WE TELL OUR STORIES

THE BEST INDIAN

RUSSELL HANDSMAN (Archaeologist): For almost 100 years Corning fountain has stood in the heart of Hartford. It is a statue which celebrates progress and the growth of Hartford into industrial city. This particular statue has four Indian males encircling the bottom. Each one is supposed to represent a particular phase in the historical development of native Americans.

In this first figure, we see Native Americans represented in their primitive pre-civilized phase. This particular figure shows an Indian male fishing. The second figure of the Native American male kneeling is supposed to represent the first comings of the colonists to Hartford. He's looking out over the horizon, dressed in a headdress never worn in Southern New England, looking at the colonists coming up from the Connecticut River Valley. The third figure shows an Indian man with a raised striking out in resistance and defense of his homelands. It is supposed to represent the time period in the 17th century when Native Americans and colonists often solved their differences through armed warfare and massacre.

The last figure was really typical of the best Indian in the late 19th century. He represents a civilized, peaceful figure, much more white than Indian, a figure who by becoming civilized left the Indian traditions behind.

TRUDIE LAMB RICHMOND (Schagticoke Tribe): The bottom line is that this fountain portrays an inaccurate picture of Indian people's history and culture. I would hope that people will learn that there's a great deal of cultural diversity, that some of us live in reservations, some of us don't. We come from all different walks of life and all different occupations and in spite of all of that, we struggle to maintain our identity as Indian people.

THE GUY ON THE NICKEL

*MOONFACE BEAR (Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe): What the hell do you got against me, white man? Who am I supposed to be but who I am?*

NARRATOR: Who are the native people of Connecticut?

Mashantucket Tribal Chairman Skip Hayward knows as well as anyone. His mother is a direct descendant of Mashantucket Pequots, his father's ancestors came over on the Mayflower.

Since 1974 Hayward has been the driving force in leading 300 members of his tribe back to the reservation.

RICHARD “SKIP” HAYWARD (Mashantucket Pequot Chairman): Until we get our museum going to show people what we're all about, they don't understand why we're black, red, white, yellow. "You're not Indian, you don't look Indian." Well, what does an Indian look like? You got to look like the guy on the nickel. You got to have blue-black straight hair and your nose has got to be just so and your lips got to look just so. You got to look the part or you're not one of those original natives.

You have one very small remnant of people and had all their land taken away. And you put them on this reservation in the 1600s and then you start moving in all of Europe and the whole world into their backyard, you're gonna change your looks. If you're Indian, what difference does it make what color you are, if you're black or white. The main thing is you can prove who you say you are.

JOSEPH CARTER (Mashantucket Pequot Tribe): You're gonna find light, dark, long hair, short hair, tight hair. We've been called extinct, so we're a very mixed tribe, but that doesn't mean that I'm not an Indian or I'm not a Native American.

NARRATOR: As with other federally recognized tribes, Mashantucket Pequot tribal applicants must prove direct descent from Pequot ancestors before being accepted into the tribe.

Pequot tribal spokesman Joe Carter came to live on the reservation in 1981.

JOSEPH CARTER: We've got quite a few people coming out of the woodwork as far as claiming their Pequot heritage. We are a federally recognized tribe, so we have to go through a federal genealogy which we trace back our ancestors to Western Pequots. Being a nation of people who were almost totally extinct causes us not to be able to marry within our tribe, which causes the bloodline of Native Americans to dissipate.

NARRATOR: Although federal guidelines for tribal membership are stringent, individual Indian identity is for many natives a cultural issue.

JANIS US: It's very hard to say "you are an Indian and you are not." Just because you happen to have less bloodlines or less blood than the other one? No. You can't do that.

NARRATOR: Janice Us teaches art to Indian children.

JANIS US: I treat everyone of my children as an equal. They are to me all Native American children. One may have more blood, one may not, I don't care. I have children in my classes right now who are blonde-haired and blue-eyed but can trace their descent to an Indian. I say that if a person is recognized culturally as a Native American within the community then he should be considered a Native American. I couldn't say that you could put a blood quota on anybody. Not only would that be wrong but so many of these records that were kept were destroyed.

MOONFACE BEAR (Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe): I don't feel that I look Black, that I act Black, or there is anything Black about me at all.

NARRATOR: Moonface Bear is a Paugussett tribal leader.

MOONFACE BEAR: My mother is Black. My mother's people came from Nigeria. They were native people and they had a way with their land, they had a culture, they had an understanding. And so that native person intermarried with an Indian Native person and those native people shared the common interests and the common enemy.

LEEANN VANVALKENBURGH (Schagticoke Tribe): My father is one-quarter Native American and my mother she's a mixture of Polish and she is definitely White, so I had the balance, so I was definitely assimilated into the White world if you will.

NARRATOR: Lee VanValkenburg is a Schagticoke tribal member.

LEEANN VANVALKENBURGH: But as I got older I found that it's easier to identify with it. I went through a stage where maybe it wasn't so easy because in high school was peer pressure and people just trying to be individuals, you just kind of didn't want to call so much attention to yourself especially when you look - maybe like me, where you have to explain yourself so much it was just easier to assimilate and just blend in, which was really what I wanted to do.

And I don't think you can say you can look at someone and say "oh, they're Native American because they have black hair and braids," or "I'm not because I have blue eyes and brown hair." I think it's who you feel you are and some people identify closer to it with it than others

MIKKI AGANSTATA (Cherokee Heritage): The average Indian person is like the average person in the State of Connecticut and you may find them anywhere. You may find them employed as part of state government, like myself. You may find them in private industry. You may find us doing technical jobs that you would never associate an Indian person as being interested in. On the other hand, you might find us at times highly visible and involved in things that are identified as Indians.

GLADYS TANTAQUIDEON, MEDICINE WOMAN

NARRATOR: People in the town of Montville have long been aware of the continuing existence of the state's Indians due to the efforts of the area's Mohegan tribe.

JAYNE FAWCETT (Mohegan Tribe): Well I don't ever remember a time when the museum wasn't a large part of my life. My aunt Gladys was always the teacher, always being certain that we didn't forget our culture.

NARRATOR: Gladys Tantaquidgeon runs the museum since the death of her brother, Harold, in 1989. In 1993 she was officially recognized as the Mohegan tribal medicine woman

GLADYS TANTAQUIDGEON (Mohegan Tribe): My father, John Tantaquidgeon, and my brother Harold Tantaquidgeon -- they built this little stone room in 1931 for the purpose of having some place-to display many of the Mohegan made items: basketry, woodwork, and some of those things. The baskets in this one section were made by my father, John Tantaquidgeon. He was the last Mohegan basket maker. And some of the bowls and spoons and other cooking utensils were also made by him. He used oak for his splints for the baskets. It's really tough -- it doesn't wear out. And for the cooking utensils, they used maple.

JAYNE FAWCETT: It's very difficult to really dislike or hate someone when you really understand

where they're coming from. And that's what the museum does: It teaches the non-Indians in town. And that, I think, was the genius of my aunt Gladys really, and my uncle.

MELISSA FAWCETT SAYET (Mohegan Tribe): Yeah, she's one, I would say, in a great line of great survivalists and great thinkers in our tribe -- her being a major person in a sense that she spans the last century and this century, being born in 1899. So she helped us make it through the 20th Century. But really what has enabled the Mohegan to survive aside from just certain flukes of history, like the fact that we weren't wiped out initially by disease, were the decisions of key individuals within the tribe. You know -- survivalists, conscious survivalists. It's not a passive thing, it's something that you have to be actively engaged in all the time.

## OUR TURN WILL COME

NARRATOR: In the 1600s, what is now Connecticut was home to nearly 30 Indian groups. Connecticut now recognizes five tribes within its borders as units of self-government.

The Mashantucket Pequot in Ledyard have been federally recognized as a sovereign nation since 1983. The neighboring Mohegans in Montville gained federal recognition in 1994. The three remaining state-recognized tribes -- Schagticoke in Kent, Pawcatuck Eastern Pequot of North Stonington, and the Golden Hill Paugussett of Trumbull and Colchester, are all seeking federal recognition in order to insure their cultural and economic survival.

MELISSA FAWCETT SAYET: Where we all come together is that we absolutely, 100-percent tow the line on our sovereignty as individual separate nations. We would like to see the outside support that sovereignty to the same degree that we support it among ourselves.

TRUDIE LAMB RICHMOND: Just the principal of being recognized by the federal government is important, that we need to have that kind of relationship between two groups. We feel like we're the step-children or something. But in addition to that, what federal recognition does is enables us to survive economically, socially and politically.

NARRATOR: The Mohegan Tribe capped off decades of effort to regain its sovereignty when it finally received federal recognition. Federal status qualifies a tribe for federal grants and loans, and other rights, including the right to engage in gaming. But the application process insists on tribal continuity.

BUTCH LYDEM (Schagticoke Tribe): When you are applying for federal recognition, one of the criteria is that you have to demonstrate from the late 1700's to the present that there indeed existed a tribal government, a functioning people that lived as Native Americans on a given reservation.

At the same time, you had state laws which prohibited folks from meeting. This is how a lot of Native Americans disseminate into the white culture and that's where we are. I guess the federal people got surprised when all these folks came up with all this information, all this documentation. They didn't think that they could demonstrate it, but they have. We're waiting. Our turn will come.

NARRATOR: For most of his life, Chief Big Eagle, the reclusive patriarch of the Golden Hill Paugussetts lives on the tribe's tiny reservation in Trumbull.

His sons Moonface Bear and Quiet Hawk have each made headlines by vigorous land claims, casino proposals, and tax-free cigarette sales.

CHIEF BIG EAGLE (Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe): When you have the first reservation -- you have people from the first reservation set aside and they have lived on Indian land for 350 years. God damn it -- don't ask me what needs to be done! Why aren't we not federally recognized? Why? It shows you, nobody cares.

NARRATOR: For Big Eagle, whose ancestors were granted the first reservation in America, the need to prove his tribe's continuous existence is by definition demeaning.

CHIEF BIG EAGLE: How can he with the stroke of his pen say I'm a citizen of his country? I'm not a citizen of his country, he's a citizen of my country. He don't recognize me.

NOT FREE TO BE INDIAN

NARRATOR: The relentless onrush of Europeans into Connecticut in the 1600s made it especially difficult for Connecticut's native people to preserve their culture.

MIKKI AGANSTATA: The ones here in the Northeast are really set apart by having the first contact, of having weathered the storm—the ferocity of this frontal assault on Indian culture than began on these shores.

TRUDIE LAMB RICHMOND: A lot has been lost and we don't want any more, you know, to go, and we don't have our language and I feel very sensitive about that. And when I hear other Indian spoken -- my husband for example is Mohawk -- and when I hear that exchange, it's hard to describe the kind of strength and support that it gives to me and how important it is.

CHARLENE PRINCE (Mashantucket Pequot Tribe): There's not much documentation about the culture, about the ceremonial practices, and what have you. The reason being is because of the massacre that took place. So anything that I can learn is very important to me. And one of the first things that I learned when I was probably about 5 or 6 years old is my mother taught me how to count.

Pequot language is not spoken fluently and there's very few bits and pieces left. So when she taught us to count she used to make us pass around a medicine ball. We'd pass it around in the living room and we'd have to say up to ten, one through ten. *(Counts to 10 in Pequot)* And we did that over and over and over again. And I still remember to this day.

NARRATOR: Mikki Aganstata moved to Connecticut in 1978 to become state Coordinator of Indian Affairs. Now a Dept. of Public Utilities employee, Aganstata works weekends at her Native-American food concession at many area powwows.

MIKKI AGANSTATA: The stress of having been surrounded, the decimation of numbers of tribal peoples from disease. as well as the push westward for land almost without fail reached its highest degree in Southern New England. As we look around today, that's the most dense population of European immigrants still today. So the assault, once it began, never let up. From the time that Europeans really began to settle in heavily in Connecticut, Indians were not free to be Indian.

BUTCH LYDEM: The Europeans started breaking up Indian people, forcing them to live off the land, forcing them to go to their schools, forcing them in their religions. And then the intermarriage starting, and just kept moving forward in that direction -- separating people, keeping them off their land or putting them on reservations. Indians are not from reservations, the land is Indian land.

NARRATOR: After a career as an auto service manager, Schagticoke tribal member Butch Lydem became a fulltime craftsperson.

BUTCH LYDEM: I believe that the creator hasn't let us develop the way a lot of other tribes are developing because it isn't our time yet. There's too many environmental concerns that we need to address and I'm trying to play a role in that.

My mom was born on Schagticoke, back in the early 1900s. And she, from the time I was young, preached to me - not preached to me, I'm sorry mom -- spoke to me about how important it was not to forget who we are, even though it wasn't popular at the time. And the native people kind of put themselves on the back shelf because of the problems that they faced admitting that they were Indian. She wouldn't let me do that. At that time it wasn't very popular to be Indian because of the ridicule that we faced. But I made it through and I'm very proud of what I am.

I've been carving for the last five or six years, I learned it through my Uncle Falcon up on Oneida. He's shown me quite a bit. He's brought me closer to the traditional ways that our people enjoy. And before that I was in the private sector, a service manager of a couple of stores.

This here is a walking stick that I've carved. It's carved out of maple. The maple comes from my reservation. It's a way of me showing respect to our land and the creator for giving me something to carve and to make beautiful. As you can see the carvings in it, many of my carvings are representative of the plants that are on my reserve.

## LOOKING FOR CULTURE

NARRATOR: Since 1978, The Mashantucket Pequot tribe has underwritten archaeological surveys on their reservation. The search has challenged widely held beliefs about the disappearance of their ancestral culture. Kevin McBride leads the tribe's archaeological activities.

KEVIN MCBRIDE (Archaeologist): Behind me are the remains of an 18th century Pequot farmstead or homestead. You can see we're in a small valley -- maybe 300 feet across -- and within this valley there may be two or three of these farmsteads. And they're all related to one another. There was still a lot of wigwams on the reservation that we find. Perhaps half the reservation lived in framed house. And that's what this is, that period of time -- 17th and 18th century -- is a time we consider a lot of native groups are undergoing a great deal of change as a result of contact with Europeans. And the archaeological sites that we investigate from that time are loaded with European material culture.

And we just assumed that what we're seeing is a process of assimilation. What we've discovered is just the opposite. We found a great deal of continuity in terms of Pequot social patterns, political patterns, ritual behavior, the way they use space, the way they continue to hunt.

I think there's two stereotypes that western Europeans/American culture has about natives in the past, and to a certain extent, the present. One is, I think people equate technological differences with inferior/superior and of course the bottom line is history is always written by the victor. I think the other great myth is that the natives led a completely idyllic view -- that before the Europeans, these were people of the forest and they were in tune with nature. And to a certain extent that's obviously true.

But for example, evidence in the record, the archaeological record, if you believe it, you know, they too had conflicts, they too had social problems, they too had political problems. They occasionally over-fished or over-clammed an area. But I think the basic difference in the societies is their view of the land and the environment.

## THE PLANTING FIELDS

DOVIE THOMASON (Lakota/Kiowa Apache Heritage): I'm from plains peoples, northern and southern plains, and as such we were more of hunting peoples. We were not gatherers and we didn't have the agriculture that people here have had. So to see the significance of plants in stories here, the different animals in stories, the whole society that built around corn in this part of the world means something very different than what I'm familiar with, where life centers around the buffalo.

RUSSELL HANDSMAN: Between about 1,000 and 500 years ago the Weantinock Indians lived and planted corn in this field at the Housatonic River. It was used to grow corn, it was hunted in, it was fished along, those kinds of things. And it was also the place where they started to bury their ancestors probably about 2,000 years ago. So there's a real spiritual connection both to the planting fields, to the ancestral burying sites, as well as to the traditional fishing sites, which would have been used generation after generation after generation.

So when the colonists come, the Weantinock and other Indian peoples agree to share the land with the Colonial peoples but they never really give it away. And so they continue to visit, they continue to use the traditional fishing sites. And they try to continue to use the traditional planting fields. When you lose access to a traditional planting field it makes surviving and social reproduction --that is the matter of being able to continue to live in traditional communities and relatively large numbers -- a lot more difficult.

There are a whole series of strategies that Indian peoples like the Weantinock use to basically submerge or to some extent hide their Indian identity for some parts of the 18th and 19th Century. But they continue to be Indian, they would continue to visit the homelands.

Wood splint baskets, for instance, are a way for people to travel from place to place, from homeland to homeland in the 19th century and they were given away as gifts to kin, to their neighbors, to people they hadn't seen in awhile, as well as being given or sold or bartered away to non-native people. So baskets are really a way to maintain links with one another.

## SURVIVAL OF THE INDIAN NATION

TRUDIE LAMB RICHMOND: I think the real struggle is holding onto the land. We have lost so much, that the fragments of land that we have left, the reservations that we have left, this is our culture.

CHIEF BIG EAGLE: Indian land is the survival of the Indian nation, without it you have no identity.

STRONG HORSE: Miantinomo was a sachem of the Narragansetts in 1642. This is a petition to the English.

*"For you know our fathers had plenty of deer and skin. Our plains were full of deer and also our woods, and of turkeys. And our coves were full of fish and fowl. But these English having gotten our land, they would scythe and cut down the grass with axes fell our trees. Their cows and the horses eat the grass, and their hogs spoil our clam banks and we shall all be starved."*

DOVIE THOMASON: The land is the people. I was always told -- my grandmother always told me -- and it's something that's echoed by many native voices, is that people cannot own land, that the earth owns the people. In that way the earth, who we call mother, gives us everything. We get our foods, our

traditions, our stories -- all things emerge from the land. We're told that, in my tradition, we emerged from the land.

MOONFACE BEAR: When the English first came here and wanted to utilize the land, and so we did some dealings and treaties and we exchanged symbolic things to say "you know, we understand, here's our hospitality, come and live amongst us.

Everything was fine, everything was good. We was happy to see them. We understood about needing land to survive, to live. But the problems didn't really come until like a fence -- when a fence like this was where maybe we walked down to the waterhole to fish. And the fence being there the next day, and crossing that fence and somebody hollering at us or shooting at us, running out with some paper or some deed saying, you know, "what are you doing? You're trespassing on my land."

And we'd say, "well, you know we've always gone down this way to go down to the water." And they'd say, "well you can't go down there no more. That's trespassing, that's illegal, that's against the law. You sold the land. You do not have that right no more."

And that's when problems arose. That's when it hit home to us, what they meant by selling the land.

MIKKI AGANSTATA: There was such a different perspective on each side. Indians who were caretakers of the land in no way could even grasp the idea of land ownership. And from the European point of view, they really couldn't see where being Indian was anything other than a temporary condition.

JANIS US: To put it bluntly, most Native Americans feel that through trickery, deceit, drunkenness with the whiskey, which they kept passing out, which Native Americans were not used to -- they managed to roughly steal away the land. They had the chiefs and the sub-chiefs, what have you, put "x's" on pieces of paper that they couldn't even read and didn't know what they were doing.

MIKKI AGANSTATA: When you look at the individual histories of the lands, the tribal lands, here in Connecticut as well as the other northeast areas, it is just astounding that there's any land in tribal control today. And it's almost equally astounding that there really are reservations. There are these little areas where people have managed to hang on. You have to admire that.

NARRATOR: Since Colonial times, state tribal leaders have repeatedly sought redress from state authorities, citing unfair treatment and the loss of their land. The Schagticoke tribe's experience is typical.

Trudie Lamb Richmond is one of the few tribal members who still live on the Schagticoke reservation.

TRUDIE LAMB RICHMOND: Schagticoke reservation was established in the early 1700s. And almost immediately, we started losing land, after the land had been set aside and had been reserved. And almost immediately, native people began requesting for some kind of assistance. Because once you're on the reservations your whole way of life changed. Your way of being able to provide for yourself was becoming more and more difficult.

And there were so many petitions with the General Assembly. The General Assembly would listen to these complaints and then say, "well we've looked into it and there's nothing more that we can do." We were constantly being encouraged to leave rather than to remain here, until our reservation today is 400 acres and there's six families that live here.

NARRATOR: Chief Big Eagle lives on one of the two Paugussett reservations -- a one-quarter-acre plot by a busy Trumbull road.

CHIEF BIG EAGLE: There's not enough land for the population to live on. And it's always been hard because you was a ward of the state up until '73. In order to live here the statement was you had to make friends with the settlers. You could be removed without cause. If you wanted to come spend the night with your mother you had to get a written letter of permission from the state in order to come.

NARRATOR: Securing sovereignty over their reservations is essential to Connecticut's native people for both economic and cultural reasons.

The Golden Hill Paugussetts have sparked several controversies: armed defense of untaxed cigarette sales on their Colchester reservation, extensive land claims in southwestern Connecticut and a gambling casino proposal in Waterbury.

Moonface Bear leads the Colchester Paugussett group, called Paugeesauk by Moonface and his tribal group.

MOONFACE BEAR: And so how are you going to have somebody being concerned about their culture and their identity when they have to make "x" amount of dollars every day to sustain just some kind of life. Because if I don't take care of my kids without insurance, DCYS will certainly be here and take them away from me. So that's the kind of pressure that we have, which is basically anybody can identify. So without economy, let's face it, how could you see a thriving community?

I grew up in the movement - I grew up in change. I grew up that everything that is going on for Indian people didn't happen because one day somebody decided to say, "let's be nice to the Indians." There were fights, confrontations, a lot of deaths, a lot of destruction in native communities to get what we have today. So I'm an adamant believer in the warrior society, and I believe in the right of nations to have our own military, I believe the right in us being a free state in the defense OF ourselves and the defense of our laws.

## AN INVISIBLE MINORITY

NARRATOR: Since the early 1600s, Connecticut's Indians have struggled against stereotypes, suspicion and racism.

CHIEF BIG EAGLE: I mean it wasn't a good thing to be Indian in this state. You couldn't get a job you couldn't get nothing else.

LORETTA ROBERGE (Mohegan Tribe): Well, my father was in the Navy and when the war started we moved back here. So, it was like a shock to us when I first came here to hear that I was called a half-breed. I had no idea what half-breed was. I asked -- came home from school and said to my father, "what is a half-breed?" And he said, "it really doesn't mean anything -- it's just people who don't know, who don't understand."

LEEANN VANVALKENBURGH (Schagticoke Tribe): It was ninth grade and it was the beginning of a history course, it was like within the first two weeks of school and the teacher had mentioned Native Americans. And when he said it, he said, "you know the people who look like they had a shovel pushed up in their face." And just hearing that, I was very, very offended but I didn't quite know how to handle that.

NARRATOR: Today public attitudes have begun to change.

JANIS US (Mohawk Heritage): I think mainly the public began to get educated. They began to realize that here was not just a drunken savage. They began to realize that we had very high artistic cultural background, that our beliefs. Well now you've got the environmentalist groups that are practicing beliefs that we've practiced since the very beginning of time.

BUTCH LYDEM: They were an invisible minority. Today, they're not so invisible and they're out there. They're in the political arena and they're taking a stand in what they believe in and what they stand for. And they're becoming more visible, they're gaining strength by number. And people are listening, people are finally listening to the plight of Native Americans.

NARRATOR: One sign of the growing visibility of Connecticut's Native Americans is the increasing number of contemporary powwows.

DOVIE THOMASON: I think there's a revival of awareness of us. And that we have always been here. And we've always remembered. We've always survived and we continue. So perhaps the revival isn't so much in us as it is in other's awareness of us.

WENDELL DEER WITH HORNS (Two Kettle Band, Lakota-Sioux): My name is Wendell Deer With Horns and I'm Two Kettle Band, Lakota, one of the many tribes in South Dakota from the Chine River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. I came out here in 1984.

NARRATOR: Wendell Deer with Horns is a hospital nurse's aide at Waterbury Hospital.

WENDELL DEER WITH HORNS: Having powwows, what we call powwow, is where we meet and socialize and have dancing and demonstrate our dancing, and demonstrate our food, our cooking, our games. It's a big event. You can meet new friends, maybe meet new non-Indian friends, bring them into our circle and invite them in and make them feel at home.

MIKKI AGANSTATA: I think all Indian individuals really anticipate the time of getting together and sharing, talking, laughing and having a good time together. But the opportunity to educate non-Indians seems to be the focus of most of the ones here in Connecticut. And I think it's like the only classroom that Indians really have today and that we should perhaps take it very seriously.

## THE OTHER PEQUOT

AGNES CUNHA (Pawcatuck Pequot Chairperson): Everyone thinks Pequots are Pequots. They’re not. They’re two separate groups.

NARRATOR: Near the wealthy and powerful Mashantucket Pequot nation is a historically linked tribe -- the Pawcatuck Eastern Pequot, who have experienced decades of disagreement over tribal membership.

AGNES CUNHA: Well right now it's kind of tough because we have 224.6 acres. And we can't even use all of it because we have non-Pequots living on our land, that's occupying our land.

NARRATOR: Agnes Cunha and her son Jim are leaders of one tribal faction, the Pawcatuck Eastern Pequot.

AGNES CUNHA: We know that these people are not who they claim they are. For 20 years we've been in legal limbo because of this. It's holding up our land claim.

ROY SEBASTIAN (Eastern Pequot Chief): We have the documentation, we have the history, we have the authentic research material. And it goes all the way back to the 1600's.

NARRATOR: Roy Sebastian is the chief of the Eastern Pequot, located on the other side of the divided reservation property.

ROY SEBASTIAN: It's probably apprehension on the other side because our tribal family outnumbers their side in many, many numbers This would give us the power in the tribal government.

NARRATOR: The Pawcatuck Eastern Pequot internal dispute is similar to other questions of identity and membership that have periodically beset all state tribes.

ED SERABIA (Connecticut Indian Affairs Coordinator): Both groups believe they are the group. Both groups believe that they are legitimate. And both groups believe they have tribal leadership and/or tribal government approval to do what they can and want on the reservations. It's been rather a fierce split.

NARRATOR: Bill Bingham is the lawyer for the Eastern Pequot faction.

BILL BINGHAM (Attorney): There is, going back into the 1920s, when the state government was attempting to dictate to the tribe who could live on the reservation, there was a question over who the legitimate tribal leadership was and who was legitimately here. And that's continued unfortunately, to the present day.

I think the problem really is based on the same thing that historically has been the problem with Native Americans, is that because the US Government and local governments have tried to force them to accept certain conditions in order to gain favor from the government, they've pitted groups against each other.

ROY SEBASTIAN: We've been fighting for three, four hundred years for our rights, for our heritage, for our family and we'll continue to fight.

AGNES CUNHA: We're gonna sit here and fight for our rights. And that's all we're asking is our constitutional right, our civil rights and our birthright. That's all we want.

## THE GREEN CORN FESTIVAL

CURTIS CHAPMAN (Mohegan Tribe): We're standing right in the center of the old Mohegan Fort. This is where the ancient tribe lived. And this area is very, very unique in that there are about 100-foot cliffs around on all sides of this little point of land. It's a natural drop where you could defend yourself. And it's still a very, very important site to us today because we have our powwow here.

NARRATOR: The return of Fort Shantok State Park and its ancient Mohegan burial ground was an essential Mohegan demand during negotiations with the state following federal recognition.

Today the tribe's annual powwow at Fort Shantok continues the Mohegan's traditional Wigwam -- or Green Corn -- Festival, which was held from 1860 annually until 1936.

GLADYS TANTAQUIDGEON: It would have been, oh - probably 85 years ago that I would have remembered about. And through the winter-months the men and women would be busy making the baskets and doing all kinds of handwork, making items they would have for sale.

This annual green corn festival was homecoming for many of our Mohegan people and visitors from all over the country. So it was quite an occasion for them to come and meet some of our people and have a chance to have some good Mohegan-made succotash, the corn and beans. And the men would go clamming and get clams. And they'd make their own clam chowder -- and women, they made their own bread and cake and things like that.

NARRATOR: The Mohegan tribe has always prided itself on cooperation with non-Indians. In 1861, the tribe decided to forego their reservation in favor of individual ownership. Today, federal recognition has led to plans for a reconstituted reservation of more than 700 acres.

JAYNE FAWCETT: Years ago my great grandfather was instrumental in deciding that the Indians didn't want an overseer. We wanted to make our own decisions. And he felt that this was an important move, which is why the reservation was dissolved at the time. We're now thinking that perhaps there are other advantages, but at that time it was important to us and we became participating citizens in this town. And there has been a mutual spirit of respect.

NARRATOR: For many years the last tribal-owned property was the Mohegan Congregational Church, which has long served both the tribe and its neighbors.

CURTIS CHAPMAN: It's like the center of the universe to the Mohegan tribe. Everything starts here and radiates outward.

COURTLAND FOWLER (Mohegan Tribe): The missionaries kept coming around. And the Mohegans were getting tired of them coming around bothering them. So the church was founded in 1831 by Sarah Huntington. And two Mohegan women donated the land to the church. I remember coming at night and then they had kerosene lamps and it was very smoky. And I remember putting up pennies when they made up the collection. I'd put my penny in the collection box. There wasn't too many people here then.

CURTIS CHAPMAN: Right from the start this church has been a mixture of Indians and non-Indians, where there could be interaction between the Indians and non-Indians. The Mohegan always wanted to learn about Western culture.

NARRATOR: The Mohegan tribe plans to turn an old 244-acre nuclear industry site in Montville into Connecticut's second gambling/resort complex.

Tribal chief Ralph Sturges negotiated the reservation and gaming settlement with the state.

RALPH STURGES (Mohegan Chief): Tribal chiefs today have to be familiar with the laws of the land. And the chief today has to be thinking of what you can do to move this tribe into the 20th century so that they not only can maintain their heritages but they can also maintain their livelihoods. Tribes today have got to become self sufficient and the only way we can do that is by taking advantage of all the educational systems and the different other systems that are available to the Indians and the minorities in the country.

## WE’RE HERE TO STAY

NARRATOR: Today the Mashantucket Pequot is known for its extraordinary success in establishing a nearly $1-billion-a-year gambling operation. But long before their gaming success, the Pequot tribe endured a 350-year journey that nearly ended in total extinction.

The Pequot were the dominant native group in what is now Connecticut. Soon after the Europeans arrived, an outbreak of smallpox killed about 80 percent of the tribe, reducing it from about 13,000 to 2,500 Indians.

After a few years of peaceful trading, a growing Puritan presence led to escalating conflicts, captive-taking, and retaliatory killing. These actions culminated in Mystic in 1637, when a group of Colonial soldiers, aided by Mohegan and Narragansett allies, massacred 400 to 700 Pequots in a surprise attack at their Mystic fort. Most of the rest of the tribe were hunted down, to be killed or enslaved. Pequot dominion was ended.

SKIP HAYWARD: And all the rest of the Pequots that could be found were rounded up and put together in one place back here in the county. That's where we find the treaty of 1638, in which the Pequots were given an ultimatum in order to live. And that's that they would not speak their language and they would stop practicing their religion and that type of thing. From 1667 when the Pequots were moved here up and through into more modern times, the Pequots weren't really encouraged to survive.

NARRATOR: Colonial Connecticut eventually established a 3,000-acre reserve for the remnants of the tribe. Over the years, both the reservation population and land base continued to shrink.

BRUCE KIRCHNER (Mashantucket Pequot Tribe): At one point the state was saying "well if the Indians don't cultivate the land then they don't deserve it" and land was taken away because the English came here and they said "we want to till the land, we'll make use of it." So the state used that as an opportunity to take land away from the tribe. There's been times where the tribe has asked for services from the state and the state would provide those services but take the land as payment.

NARRATOR: By the early 1970s there were only two elderly Pequot women living on the last 200 acres of reservation land. The tribal homeland seemed to be a heartbeat from extinction.

SKIP HAYWARD: The thought was that when the old ones die then this whole nightmare would go away and we could just turn the place into a state park.

NARRATOR: But Skip Hayward's grandmother had always encouraged him to hang on to the land at all costs. And that's what he set out to do.

JOSEPH CARTER: When I first came to the reservation, which is close to 10 years ago, there really wasn't any future. There was no promise of jobs, there was no promise of housing or anything. I was just invited back. And Skip said that we would be building and trying to make a living for some of the tribal members in order for us to bring back some of the people.

NARRATOR: The Pequot's massive success with gambling is only the latest effort to foster economic development and bring tribal members back to the reservation.

JOHN HOLDER (Mashantucket Pequot Tribe): The reason for the success is working together for a common goal. The casino wasn't the dream to be. The casino happened to be what we were allowed to do through the federal gaming laws. When we tried the greenhouse, the restaurant, a swine operation, wood cutting and all that sort of thing, it wasn't successful enough to provide jobs and housing for all the people. The casino has been able to do that for us.

NARRATOR: With annual profits from gaming estimated to be about $600 million, the tribe has built a community infrastructure on their now 1,200-acre reservation. They own an additional 1,800 acres of non-reservation property with plans to purchase another 600 acres.

BRUCE KIRCHNER: We have a land base now and we'll never let that go. That's something that's gonna be basic for generations and generations.

JOSEPH CARTER: It has made a drastic impact as far as change of lifestyle and the things that we can do for tribal people as far as health, education and housing. Along with fame and fortune comes a lot of problems. And we're realizing this and we're trying to educate our children on these problems, so hopefully they can jump over these hurdles.

JOHN HOLDER: We're Native American -- we're proud of it. We're not only succeeding economically within our own tribe, but we're helping the entire region through tourism, jobs. With our expansion we'll probably be one of the largest employers in the state of Connecticut. And we're here to stay and we're trying to make it as nice as we can.

## LESSONS OF LONG POND

NARRATOR: The Pequot's experience in archaeological projects served them well when a residential construction project at Long Pond, near their reservation, accidentally uncovered an old Pequot burial site. The discovery of that site was painful to the tribe, but it allowed a rare window into ancient Pequot society.

THERESA BELL (Mashantucket Pequot Tribe): We've done a lot of archaeological sites and we have over 200 on the reservation. And they've all been farmsteads, homesteads. It was never -- they were all exciting but never as devastating as a site like this. And it was something that was very hard for the tribe to deal with. But we knew we had to deal with it and answer a lot of questions to ourselves and within ourselves and the whole tribe of how we would handle what happened here at this site. And it turned out to be a major cemetery.

KEVIN MCBRIDE: I think another concern of the tribe was that recognizing that most native burials are discovered accidentally and the vast majority of those burials are never reported because of the fear of individuals that projects will be stopped, land will be taken.

THERESA BELL: These sites are being destroyed left and right all over and God knows how many of them there are that have never been brought out in the open. And so the tribe made the decision to let the homeowner build his house here with the stipulations that no other ground disturbance.

CHARLENE PRINCE: To take them out of that site was very hard. The tribe feels that whatever we take out of the ground, or in the way that we take it out of the ground, has to be -- it has to be shown respect. The methods that you use -- putting everything back in its place the way it came out of the ground, with the ceremonial fires and whatever the offerings and the prayers.

THERESA BELL: So we believe we did what was right for these people. And now they are re-interred back at the Mashantucket cemetery where we know they'll be protected. They have their funerary objects with them. That's one thing that the tribe also believes in is not keeping the funerary objects.

And I think the biggest part that we learned from this is that they weren't the savages that people thought they were. The technology in that jewelry that they took with them was just unbelievable and it's never been seen before. And we think that that's exciting to show what Native American people were like then. And to make the stuff that they did with the tools that they must have used, was just -- it's amazing to the tribe.

KEVIN MCBRIDE: Those burials that were removed -- my mandate was to study them, without using any destructive techniques. Study them, learn as much as I could and rebury them as quickly as possible.

If you compare the items from this cemetery with items throughout the northeast, you'll see that they're identical. Certain effigies, duck effigies, crescents, waterfowl, turtles, some of the necklaces themselves are identical to what are found in Iroquoian sites in New York State.

What it means is -- and this is a point we've completely missed -- is that these items and objects continue to be of traditional importance to the natives and that the Pequots are involved in this regionwide network of ritual exchange, social exchange, information exchange.

## AS WE TELL OUR STORIES

TRUDIE LAMB RICHMOND: I feel very strong connections to my ancestors. I guess that's why I really insist on being here at Schagticoke. I feel those connections that I'm passing on to my children and to my grandchildren: How important it is to maintain their Schagticoke ancestry because we have some very important legacies that we must not let go, that we must not let die out.

This was used -- these sharp points here -- the thorns are off of the Locust tree. And Schagticoke people -- I'm sure other native people also -- used these as fishing hooks. And they're quite treacherous. So not only are they protection for the tree, but this is just one way of using the environment. All the things surrounding us here were used and are still used in so many ways. For example, I collect any number of medicines here. I collect sassafras, black root, birch, jack-in-the-pulpit. And I use these things to heal myself, to heal my family.

Native people believe that we are related to all things and where our stories come from. The story is that stories come from the stone people -- from the boulders. It gives a lot of strength but also an understanding as to our connection to everything. So not only do we have respect for trees, for plants, for animals, but for stones, for boulders. So something like this boulder is very special to me.

DOVIE THOMASON: This is one of the stories of beginnings that was given to me by Joe Brushac and Princess Red Wing, both Algonquian story tellers, when I first moved to the east.

*Before this world came to be, there lived in the sky country an ancient chief. And in the center of his land stood a great tree with four white roots stretching to the four directions. It was from this beautiful tree that all good things came to be.*

*As it came to pass, the tree was uprooted and the young wife of the chief fell through the hole that was created. As she fell and tumbled she reached up clutching, and grabbed a fistful of seeds, which she held in her hand as she fell.*

*Far below, there was only water. And the water creatures looking up saw someone falling. "Look! Someone is falling! She will need a place to be!" Great Turtle came up from the bottom of the sea, which was his home. And as he reached the surface he spoke. "There's room for her on my back."*

*"She will need a place to walk around though," Duck said. "Then dive, dive to the bottom of the sea and find earth and bring it to put on my back." And so Duck dove as far as he could but failed.*

*When he came up Loon agreed to try, and dove again, trying harder but couldn't reach the bottom. And Beaver, he tried and again failed.*

*Finally, there was just little Muskrat who spoke up: "I will try." And she dove, swimming deeper and deeper until her lungs felt like they would burst. At last her paw touched the bottom and she grabbed a speck of earth, which she brought with her to the surface and put on Turtle's back.*

*"Spread it around," Turtle said. And they spread it and spread it until this whole place came to be. Now two great swans lift it up from the earth and caught the woman as she fell, lowering her gently to the surface of the earth.*

*When her feet first touched the earth, she dropped the seeds in her hands. And then the plants began to grow. And from them all life on this new world began.*