

Our Artists

After the Abenaki tribes of Vermont received recognition, our artists could finally sell artwork legally under the Indian Arts and Crafts Law of 1990. We realized the need to pool our resources, network and market our art. We formed the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association (VAAA) as an inter-tribal arts council called the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association (VAAA) that serves artists from all of the states recognized Abenaki tribes.

Our mission is to promote Vermont's Indigenous arts and artists, to provide an organized central place to share creative ideas and professional development as entrepreneurs, and to have a method for the public to find and engage our artists.

We have traditional artists who carry on skills such as wampum making, twining bags, quillwork, beadwork, pipe carving, and sewing regalia and performing artists who perform traditional music, dance, and storytelling

We teach our history and culture through discourse, producing documentary films, and writing books about our history and developing educational programs.



For more information



abenaki-edu.org



abenakiart.org



elnuabenakitribe.org



koasekofthekoas.org



tribal.abenakination.com



abenakitribe.org

The Western Abenaki: Then and Now



Developed by the Vermont Abenaki Artists Association, as a companion for traveling exhibition *Parley and Protocol, Abenaki Diplomacy Past and Present.*

Francine Poitras. *18th Century Abenaki Couple.*
Acrylic on Canvas Jones.

The Abenaki have lived in the region for over 12,000 years. They are sometimes referred to as the “Dawnland People” because the word Wabanaki translates to People of the Dawn.

Historians categorize Abenaki communities into two categories: the Western and Eastern Abenaki. Historically the Western Abenaki people lived in what is today known as Eastern New York, Northern Massachusetts, Southwestern Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and north toward Quebec, Canada. As members of the Seven Nations and Wabanaki Confederacy, Abenakis interacted with their Native American neighbors to the North, South, East and West on a regular basis.



17th century Abenaki Encampment

Upon the arrival of Europeans, disease, and warfare caused immeasurable changes in the Abenaki way of life. The Abenakis allied with the French with whom they traded raw materials for new commodities such as wool, linen shirts, silk ribbons, glass beads, tools, and firearms.

As allies, the Abenaki and French fought together against the British encroachment into *N'Dakinna* (Abenaki for homeland).

By the late 18th century, prejudice and the embattled situation in surrounding areas forced the Abenaki to break up into smaller family bands or clans in order to survive. In the 18th century, the British burned our long-standing villages of Mission des Loups at the Koas, Missisquoi along the Missisquoi River, and St. Francis – which the Abenaki people know as Odanak – in Quebec. Little is recorded about the Abenaki in historical accounts of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. However, our families maintained oral histories and strong traditions from this time. Since the 1970s, the Abenaki have been experiencing an interest in cultural revitalization.



Gourd art by Jeanne Morningstar Kent.



Abenaki families singing traditional Abenaki Music at the Abenaki Heritage Weekend.

Today, there are two provincially recognized Western Abenaki tribes in Canada: the Odanak and Wolinak tribes. In the United States, four Abenaki tribes received State recognition in Vermont in 2011 and 2012: the Elnu, Koasek, Missisquoi and Nulhegan tribes. According to data from the 2010 census, it is estimated that there are approximately 2,100 Abenakis in Quebec and 3,200 in Vermont and New Hampshire. That is a conservative figure because it doesn't include non-recognized and unaffiliated Abenaki families.



Abenaki educator teaches children how to do the Round Dance.