



*Winter Center for Indigenous Traditions*

**ABENAKI NATION LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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for *Cedar Circle Farm and Education Center*, East Thetford, Vermont**

When Indigenous peoples in the Americas travel to other Indigenous Nation homelands, it is a common courtesy since ancient times to acknowledge the **Indigenous Nation and Peoples** whose homeland we are gathering on.

**Cedar Circle Farm and Education Center** is located on the western bank of the *Kwanitekw* [Connecticut River] in *N'dakinna* [Our Land] in the middle of the ancient **Abenaki Nation homeland** which includes Vermont, New Hampshire, northern Massachusetts, western Maine, and southern Quebec. The *Alnôbak* [the People] as they are called in *Alnôbaiwi* [the **Abenaki language**] have also been called the *Wôbanakiak* [People of the East/Dawnland] or **Abenaki** since ancient times by Indigenous relatives in the east and Indigenous peoples as far away as **Hopi** and *Diné* [Navajo] Country all the way to present day Alaska and Tierra del Fuego in South America.

This is the sovereign homeland of the **Abenaki Nation and People**. **Abenaki** traditions speak clearly of being created here since the beginning. Some archaeologists and linguists, as recently as the last forty years, stated that the **Abenaki** and all of their **Algonquin language group relations** from California and the High Plateau to the Plains, Great Lakes, Hudson Bay, the Maritimes in eastern Canada, and down the east coast to Virginia are no more than **1,500 years old**. More recently, a few scholars have stated that the **Abenaki** may be related to Indigenous Peoples who are documented here for **9,000 years**. This date keeps moving back with documented places including the major **Abenaki** site recently documented in Keene, NH dated to the **mid-12,000 B.P.** (Before Present) time period. The **Abenaki** peoples, along with many of their cousins in the Northeast, state unequivocally that *'We have always been here, and we will always be here.'* Oral traditions of the **Abenaki** and their cousins including the **Wampanoag** of southeastern Massachusetts remember the glacial times (**14,000 to 35,000 B.P.**) The **Abenaki** even have names for the megafauna including the Mammoth/Mastodon known to have lived here in ancient times. There are many other linguistic and traditional indications of great **Abenaki** antiquity here in this region.

From ancient times to **1760** the **Abenaki Nation** of numerous villages and thousands of extended families lived as an independent Native Nation recognized by other Native Nations and the Dutch, French, British, and other European colonizers. Though some parts of the homeland in the Seacoast of present-day New Hampshire and Maine, southern Vermont and New Hampshire as well as northern Massachusetts, and Quebec, were shared with the encroaching English colonists from the 1630s on, the original homeland has never been sold or given away.

In the American Revolution from 1775 to 1783, George Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, Jacob Bailey, Timothy Bedell, Moses Hazen and many other leaders of the American resistance agreed with the **Abenaki** and their cousins the **Penobscot** and **Passamaquoddy** of Maine, that they would retain their villages and homelands in exchange for helping in the defense of the northern frontier against the British. The ancient villages of **Missisquoi** in Northwestern Vermont and **Koasek/Coos** in the Upper Connecticut River were both explicitly acknowledged by the Americans as Abenaki villages of longstanding which would remain in Abenaki hands in perpetuity. The **Penobscot** and **Passamaquoddy Nations** retained three villages in Maine after the Revolution following a tremendous, thirty-year struggle for acknowledgement down to 1800. In Abenaki country, the word of the new American colonials was not kept.

The **Abenaki Nation** was largely driven underground in the **1760 to 1800** period. The People remained in every town and watershed in the homeland right down to the present day. In the **1970s**, the **Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi** in northwestern Vermont and the **Koasek Abenaki** of the **Koasek Traditional Band of the Sovereign Abenaki Nation** in Thetford, Vermont and the Upper Connecticut River Valley stood up. They formed the **Abenaki Nation coalition** with many Abenaki extended families and communities to protect and care for the People and the homeland as well as to facilitate the protection of Abenaki burial grounds and sacred sites, and to return Abenaki burials, grave goods, and sacred items back home for reburial. From the 1970s, the census population of **Abenaki and other Indigenous People** in Vermont and New Hampshire grew from less than **100** to **17,635** in the census records.

In **2008**, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Federal Acknowledgement Project rejected the **Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi** petition for federal recognition with extensive involvement of the Vermont Attorney General's office. In **2011** and **2012**, the Vermont Legislature acknowledged four Abenaki communities including, the **Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi**, the **Elnu Tribe**, the **Nulhegan Tribe**, and the **Koasek Band of the Koas**.

The original **Koasek Traditional Band of the Sovereign Abenaki Nation**, which is still based in **Thetford, Vermont**, was blocked from being acknowledged by the Vermont Legislature and three of the four new tribes in 2016. In addition the **Abenaki Nation of New Hampshire** and the **Cowasuck Band of Pennacook/Abenaki People** are long standing Abenaki groups which are also neither state nor federally recognized. There are hundreds of Abenaki extended families in this area and the wider nation homeland and beyond which are still here. In Canada, there are two **Abenaki Nation** communities at **Odanak** and **Wolinak** which are both federally recognized in Canada as First Nations.

**We acknowledge the ancient Abenaki Nation and People. We are aware that many newcomer families from Europe, Africa, and Asia who moved or fled to this area and the region were welcomed from the 1600s on and given Indigenous Seeds and Plants, shown the ways of *Sogalikan* (Maple Sugaring), introduced to many, crucial technologies and ways of living from Canoe, Toboggan, Snowshoe, and Basket Making to ways of Farming, Fishing, and living along with caring for the land, waters, and air in a good way which are still widely practiced in the Abenaki homeland. We are committed to continuing to learn to care for the land, waters, and air here in partnership with the many Abenaki Nation peoples in a better, more respectful way.**