

Special Town Meeting - October 16, 2023

Article 16 - Fund Awareness and Educational Initiatives to Honor Indigenous Peoples

Finance Committee Vote on 10/5/23: 4-3-0

On Behalf of the Finance Committee "Aye" Votes: Constance Kremer

October 10th was what is now called Indigenous People's Day. Of the many indigenous tribes who make up generations of people native to the continent of North America and here on Cape Cod, are the Wampanoag tribe, otherwise known as People of the First Light. It's the magical light that makes the lower Cape so special. We should be making every effort to mark this Federal holiday here in town in some way.

The "aye" votes from the Finance Committee believe that a \$15,000 commitment from AVAILABLE FUNDS as a first step to engage and show our respect for what we could learn from the Wampanoag people among us, is -- in the grand scheme of this warrant -- a very small amount of our Town's annual budget, which exceeds \$50 million dollars.

In Orleans, in 2023, we stand here on unceded land once occupied specifically by the Nauset people. The Nauset Tribe, sometimes referred to as the Cape Cod Indians, lived east of Bass River on lands occupied by their closely related neighbors, the Wampanoag. Living along the Atlantic Ocean, the Nauset and Wampanoag relied heavily on seafood harvesting. Both tribes spoke in the common tongue, the Massachusetts language, and shared many of the same cultural and agricultural practices. The Nauset tribe was the first tribe to be visited by European explorers and colonists in Provincetown, who in subsequent years abducted and sold them into slavery, as well as introducing diseases, which eventually led to an eradication of their existence on these lands.

Today, the lineage of the Wampanoag tribe and its council in Mashpee is the only direct link we have to this lands' history, indigenous culture and traditions. Article 16 looks to make a commitment to acknowledge this fact of unceded land and the continued existence, vibrancy and resilience of the Wampanoag people in the face of all that exists outside of them in our community.

Unlike many of the Articles that the Finance Committee votes on, Article 16 specifically states \$15,000 in funds will be used to provide educational opportunities and initiatives, but leaves room for us to hear from the Wampanoag's Tribal Council on what ideas they have about the best ways in which the Select Board and Town Manager can engage. After 12,000 years of their occupancy of Cape Cod land and just 226 years of Orleans being incorporated as a town, it is not unfathomable for the Wampanoag tribe to want to know that the Town is seriously committed in some small way to truly cultivate a relationship. WE, the community of Orleans, will be the beneficiaries of this effort and better for it. Thank you.