



## **MAS receives \$10,000 grant for professional development program**

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MIDDLEBORO — The Massachusetts Archaeological Society//Robbins Museum of Archaeology has received an award of \$10,000 from Mass Humanities Foundation to support a comprehensive professional development program open to area educators.

The "We, the Peoples" project comprises a series of in-depth workshops to be held at the museum from May through December. Participating educators will undertake a survey of primary and secondary documents and engage in a series of lectures and open-ended question and answer sessions co-led by Native American speakers and local scholars as they analyze the interrelationships between Native American and European and between and among Native groups themselves at key moments in Massachusetts history.

Professional Development Points (PDPs) will be awarded to teachers who take part in the program and create new, standards-based curriculum for their schools and districts.

"We are very excited to have received the Mass Humanities grant," notes MAS President Frederica Dimmick. "The funding will enable the Society to play both an active and a supportive role in curriculum development for Massachusetts school children as they learn about the lives and traditions of our First Peoples. We look forward to an opportunity for interaction with participants in this project."

"Through programs such as the We, the Peoples initiative, educators can gain knowledge and work to provide more accuracy in their curricula, " added lead scholar and Native American descendant Dr. Joyce Rain Anderson of Bridgewater State College's Department of English. "Engaging educators in an exploration of primary source documents allows them to see varied perspectives on early encounters of Natives and colonizers and to explore how perceptions were shaped and misconceptions formed."

According to Mary Concannon, project director and education coordinator for the Robbins Museum, the We, the Peoples program offers a unique forum for teachers and experts to work together and meet common learning goals.

"Scholars and speakers will serve as mentors to participating educators, sharing their expertise in reading and analyzing early documents, setting the tone for a comprehensive understanding of historical events and the impacts of those events on Native Americans," she said.

This approach, she added, "Enables honest and open discussion about a part of American history that not only resonates deeply within local Native American communities, but that is often under appreciated and little understood. Our hope is that wider empathy for and understanding of

Native cultures and histories will result, and that teachers will draw from this wider view of the past as they create new educational materials and broaden their own in-class dialogues as well."

Donna Mitchell, Wampanoag storyteller, museum docent, and Native American liaison for the project, echoed this sentiment.

"The We, the Peoples grant represents an opportunity for the various Indigenous peoples of southeastern New England — and, indeed, the Northeast — to begin a dialogue with non-Indigenous scholars, educators, and program participants willing to put forth our stories, histories, and traditions, aspects of our cultures that have been denied in the past or told only by others," Ms. Mitchell explained. "Having this opportunity to collaborate and to tell our own stories is a positive step forward in educating student to understand, acknowledge, and honor the histories of the Indigenous Peoples of our region."

Ms. Concannon said one of the goals of the We, the Peoples project is to create a learning experience for students that follows them from elementary through high school. She particularly encouraged teams of educators representing grades 3, 5, 7, and 9/10 as well as curriculum coordinators and interested administrators to enroll for the workshops, which will be held both at the museum and at Bristol Community College. PDP costs range from \$10 to \$25 per district team.

To enroll in the We, the People workshops, go to: [www.massarchaeology.com](http://www.massarchaeology.com). For more information, call the museum at 508-947-9005 or email [mtconcannon@yahoo.com](mailto:mtconcannon@yahoo.com).

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