

# ENGLISH INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO CONVERT

THE ENGLISH came here so they could worship as they saw fit, unfettered by the powers in their home country. But once established, they immediately began efforts to force Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Narragansett, Pequot, and others from this land to follow their ways, *writes our investigative reporter Looking Mouse, Winter Moon, 1651.*

To the north, John Eliot preaches to all who will listen. To the south, Thomas Mayhew preaches on Noepe and Nantucket. Richard Bourne preaches from Manomet to Massipee, and throughout the Narrow Land.

Reports tell us Hiacoomes from Chappaquiddick was the first Wampanoag to convert in 1643. Many people have converted, but many others see this religion as the end of our ancient way of life. This has caused much strife and division in our communities.

Now Eliot has established a “Praying Town” at Natick, with many more planned. The goal is to make Indian people English. They must comply with the set regulations, or receive fines or punishment. This threatens not only our way of life, but our very lives. Yet many agree to live this way in order to live at all.



MANY MYTHS surround the arrival of the English settlers. One is that the Indians welcomed the Pilgrims with open arms. Another is the “peace treaty” of 1621. And everyone’s heard of the First Thanksgiving! Another huge misunderstanding is the idea of 50 years of peace until King Philip’s War in 1675.

If there were truly 50 years of peace, then why did the war take place?

Many things occurred that were not very peaceful. By the 1630s, the English settlers wanted more and more Wampanoag land. They forced Wampanoag and other tribal nations of the region to convert to Christianity. They created early reservations, or Indian districts, to move Native people offland that they wanted.

They developed laws that prevented Native people from following traditional ways. Native children were forcibly taken from their families and given to English families, who believed this was for their own good.

These are only some of the colonial practices used to dominate, control, or get rid of Native people. The Wampanoag and others negotiated, compromised, and tried to work with the English until they saw no alternative but war if they were going to save any of their lands and traditional ways.

All of the mythology of the English settlers and Indians being “friends” distorts, or hides, the true history. There was no 50 years of peace. This is why Native people today sometimes find conventional interpretations of history offensive.