

CAPE ANN Museum



Native Waters; Native Lands

Four city-wide partners collaborate with Native artists to create a traditional canoe (muhsh8n) and traditional structure (wetu) in Gloucester for the 400+ anniversary



The Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers perform during Indigenous Heritage Day at the Cape Ann Museum Green on Saturday, September 24, 2022.

GLOUCESTER, MASS. (February 28, 2023) – The Cape Ann Museum received a \$25,000 grant from the Essex County Community Foundation’s Creative County Initiative for a new collaborative project, *Native Waters; Native Lands – A Muhsh8n and Wetu in Gloucester*. The Museum will coordinate a city-wide collaboration between the City of Gloucester, Discover Gloucester, the Gloucester 400+ Committee, and SmokeSygnals, a Wampanoag curatorial firm, starting in April 2023.

“As the steward of Cape Ann’s history, the Museum is dedicated to collaborating with our partners Steve and Jen Peters from SmokeSygnals and the Native artisans they work with to create these large-scale, public installations that will bring Native history front and center during the Gloucester 400+”

anniversary,” says Cape Ann Museum Director Oliver Barker. “We’re thrilled to have so many local cultural partners supporting this important city-wide collaboration.”

2023 marks 400 years since English colonizers first settled on the land that is now called Gloucester. This partnership demonstrates a city-wide effort to mark the anniversary by accurately telling the Native histories of this area with Native partners. This spring, SmokeSignals will create a Wetu (traditional structure) out of bent saplings at the Cape Ann Museum Green. Visitors to CAM Green will be able to tour the Wetu and learn about the project from May – September 2023. SmokeSignals will return in the fall to create a Muhsh8n (traditional canoe) that will be presented during the Gloucester 400+ Committee’s *A Celebration of Place: The Cultural Heritage Festival* on October 7 & 8, 2023 at Stage Fort Park. The Wetu and Muhsh8n will be displayed together at the Cape Ann Museum Green in 2024 and 2025 as a multi-year temporary installation to highlight how Native communities live, travel, and fish in this region both historically and today.

“SmokeSignals strives with each project to create environments that share history in the image and voice of the people who descend from it. This approach fosters connections between the past and where people stand today,” writes Steven Peters, the Creative Director of SmokeSignals. “Through this connection between past and contemporary, we firmly believe the public can be more compassionate to the issues minority groups face today and, over time, may begin to break down the flaws in thinking that result in systemic racism.”

Native Waters; Native Lands grew out of a partnership in 2022 between the Cape Ann Museum and SmokeSignals that culminated in the presentation of Indigenous Heritage Day at the Cape Ann Museum Green. On Saturday, September 24, 2022, nearly 200 people attended to see the Wampanoag Nation Singers & Dancers perform and the presentation of two artifacts from the Museum’s collections that were restored by artist Darius Coombs using the same methods and materials that his ancestors used hundreds of years ago. The artifacts are now on display in the Maritime & Fisheries Galleries at the Museum and SmokeSignals is working on a graphic to accompany these pieces and the *Native Waters; Native Lands* project that places the 400-year colonial history within the larger Native history of this land.

Starting in March 2023 and continuing into 2024, the Cape Ann Museum will be displaying five Native objects from the Peabody Essex Museum including three artifacts from the Bull Brook site in current-day Ipswich Massachusetts, dated to approximately 10,000 years ago, and Native artwork from the late 19th and early 21st centuries. This fall, through a partnership with Historic New England, the Museum will display three works by Erica Campbell, a contemporary Nipmuc artist, in response to collection items from the Beauport, the Sleeper-McCann House (1907).

Through the ongoing collaborations between SmokeSignals, the Cape Ann Museum, Discover Gloucester, the City of Gloucester, and the Gloucester 400+ Anniversary Committee, Native history as told and created by regional Native partners will be centrally located and collaboratively highlighted across the city. As Discover Gloucester’s Executive Director, Tess McColgan says, “*Native Waters; Native Lands* is an opportunity to create space for history held by the Native communities who live on this land, and who held roots here for centuries before 1623.” Presenting these histories through engaging, creative, public installations in two high trafficked locations and through a coordinated series of events will make them visible to as many residents of and visitors to Gloucester as possible.

"I am grateful for the partnership with the Cape Ann Museum, SmokeSignals, Discover Gloucester, and Gloucester 400+ organization on the *Native Waters; Native Lands* project," said Mayor Greg Verga. "A key piece of the Gloucester 400+ anniversary is to acknowledge and learn about our community's past; this meaningful installation creates that opportunity for residents and visitors to thoughtfully learn from and experience a piece of Native history and culture. I am personally looking forward to this project and continuing to learn about Gloucester's story."

ABOUT THE ESSEX COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (ECCF):

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CAM's Native Initiative design, created by the Wampanoag-owned production company SmokeSignals in partnership with the Cape Ann Museum, is a play-off of Eastern Woodlands patterns with two common pots. The common pot represents multiple groups of people coming together around a meal. The design is formatted into a timeline with numbers representing 12,000 years of indigenous time on this land and 400 years since European settlement. This logo is used by the Cape Ann Museum as a recognizable visual tying together all of the elements of CAM's ongoing Native Initiatives including public projects, objects on display, events, and educational materials.

The Cape Ann Museum, founded in 1875, exists to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of the area and to keep it relevant to today's audiences. Spanning 44,000 square feet, the Museum is one of the major cultural institutions on Boston's North Shore welcoming more than 25,000 local, national, and international visitors each year to its exhibitions and programs. In addition to fine art, the Museum's collections include decorative art, textiles, artifacts from the maritime and granite industries, three historic homes, a Library & Archives and a sculpture park in the heart of downtown Gloucester. In Summer 2021, the Museum opened the 12,000 square foot Janet & William Ellery James Center at the [Cape Ann Museum Green](#). The campus also includes three historic buildings – the White-Ellery House (1710), the recently acquired Babson-Alling House (c.1740), and an adjacent Barn (c. 1740), all located on the site at the intersection of Washington and Poplar Streets in Gloucester.

The Cape Ann Museum is located at 27 Pleasant Street in Gloucester and is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is \$15.00 adults, \$12.00 Cape Ann residents, seniors, and students. Youth (18 and under) and Museum members are free. Cape Ann residents can visit for free on the second Saturday of each month. For more information please call (978)283-0455 x110 or visit www.capeannmuseum.org.

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