

★ Where are the **Wabenaki** homelands? What does the name mean?

from a talk by Ron Paul (Penobscot) at UMass on February 26, 2020

ckuwi = come this way

ckuwap = look this way

ckuwapon = the sun is looking our way (dawn)

In Abenaki (and, by extension, Algonkian) culture, the creation of all life was done by the sun and the earth, with the sun as the father and the earth as the mother.

The dawn of a new day is an important event, because every day is a “do-over” – you get to correct the mistakes of the past and to launch new and exciting ventures.

ki = earth, soil, land

kik = on the ground, on the land

kiyig = the people who live on the land

the suffixes **ik ak uk ok** are all locatives or indicative of people

the suffix **abe** (ah-bay) = people

ckuwaponahkik = the land where the sun first looks our way

ckuwaponahkiyig = the people who live on the land where the sun first looks our way (people of the dawnland)

~~ckuwaponahkiyig~~ = wabenaki

The Europeans had great difficulty comprehending Indian naming schemes. They did not understand, for example, that individuals did not necessarily keep their birth name throughout their lives, but were often given new names to reflect their accomplishments or roles. Also, the Europeans did not fathom that groups of Indians that lived great distances apart and seemed (to them) to be unconnected could actually be part of the same nation.

When, for example, Samuel de Champlain explored the gaspeguyuk (gaspé in French) peninsula, he encountered several large groups of Indians living along

the river. He always asked what they called themselves, and his scribe recorded the answers. There was probably a lot of sign language and gesturing involved, because the two cultures had not had much contact, so spoken words were probably not well understood.

gaspeguyuk = end of water (where fresh and salt waters mix)

One of the first groups he encountered told him they were Wabenaki (pronounced ah-ben-AH-key in English, but ah-BEN-ah-key in Algonkian). A hundred miles away, he encountered another group who told him the same thing. "Impossible!" he said, "I just met some people down the river who told me that!"

"8h8h (Yes)," they said, "nimicamog (those are my people)" And so Champlain called them the Micmac.

There are many other examples.