



Cultural Importance of River Herring to the Passamaquoddy People

by Edward Bassett
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Sipayik Environmental Department
Pleasant Point Reservation
Passamaquoddy Tribe

edb@wabanaki.com
1-207-853-2600 (x255)

Summary

For over twelve thousand years River Herring (Alewife and Blueback Herring) have migrated from the sea by the millions to spawn in the upper headwaters of the St. Croix River Watershed. From the Passamaquoddy perspective this indigenous food fish is responsible for feeding a wide variety of aquatic, avian and mammalian creatures including humans. Without this fish the Passamaquoddy People would not have survived. This caloric rich fish is considered a keystone fish species ⁽¹⁾ critical for maintaining the balance of life wherever they migrate. In the past, the St Croix River was considered the most fertile and productive river in the down-east region of Maine with an estimated maximum of 30 to 40 million river herring returning each year to spawn. That is a lot of food!

Water and fish are sacred to the Passamaquoddy. All living things depend on water for survival. It should be clean and abundant. Fish have always been a major source of food for the Passamaquoddy. Water and fish are deeply embedded into our history, culture, traditional beliefs and legends and spirituality.

For many generations our people have witnessed the degradation of water and the food fishery in our homeland from newcomers building dams, blocking fish passage, flooding land, log drives, over fishing, stocking exotic and invasive species and pollution. Our traditional food fish (River Herring, Atlantic Salmon and American Shad) have suffered devastating loss of numbers over the past 500 years. The once magnificent runs of Atlantic Salmon and Shad are not seen anymore. In 2002 the count of adult spawning river herring returning to the St. Croix River hit an all-time low of just 900 (*See table 2, Adult Alewife Returns At Milltown!*)⁽²⁾ The tribe is determined to work with our partners, friends and allies to reverse the damage done to the environment and restore the sea-run fishery in our region.

On June 5, 2013, the tribe entered into a formal working relationship with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA-Fisheries and the Environmental Protection Agency “Federal Partners” to cooperate in the restoration of the St Croix Watershed, our homeland.⁽³⁾ Part of this cooperation is to assist NOAA and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Technical Expert Working Group (TEWG)⁽⁴⁾ for River Herring. This paper is intended to explain the cultural importance of river herring from the Passamaquoddy

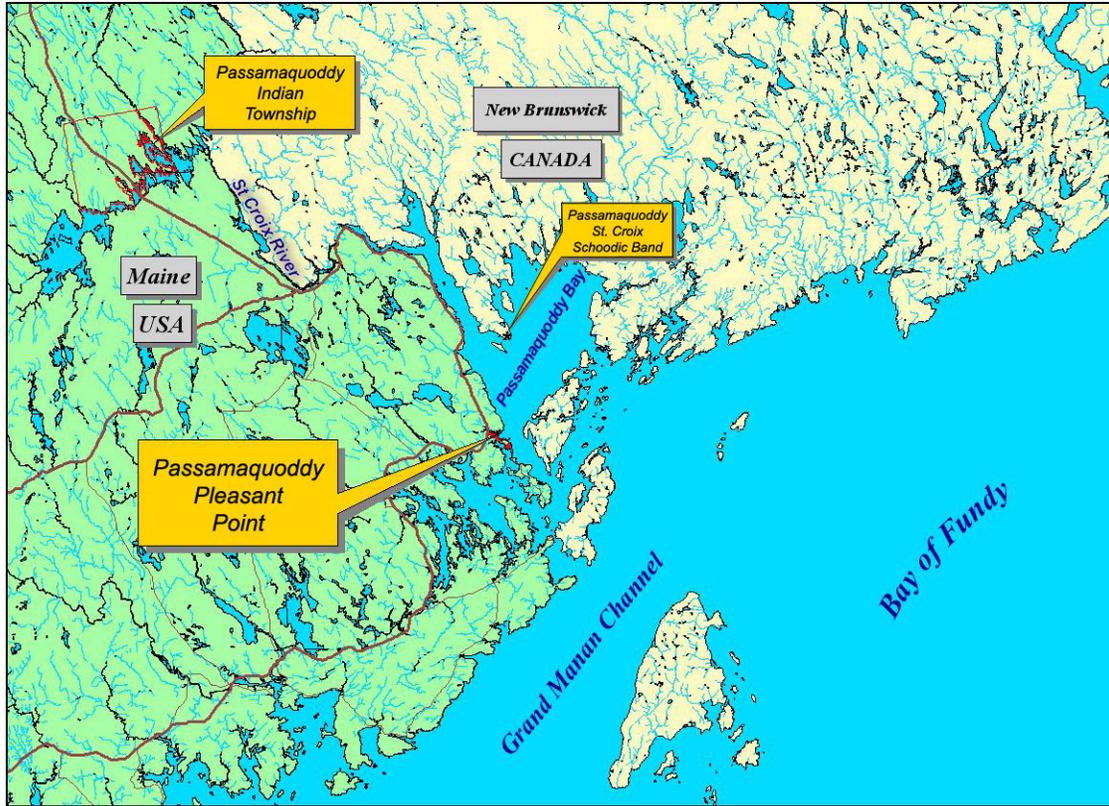
perspective. This was written in response to NOAA's interest in understanding the cultural importance of river herring in the U.S. and Canada to East Coast Native American Tribes and First Nations to support NOAA and ASMFC's development of a River Herring Conservation Plan.

The tribal Environmental Department has agreed to contribute to this task. We hope the following information will help provide a glimpse into the indigenous perspective. We want to help foster a better understanding, build alliances and strengthen partnerships between tribes, governments, education institutions, NGO's and individuals toward the ultimate goal of protecting and enhancing precious resources on Mother Earth.

The Passamaquoddy

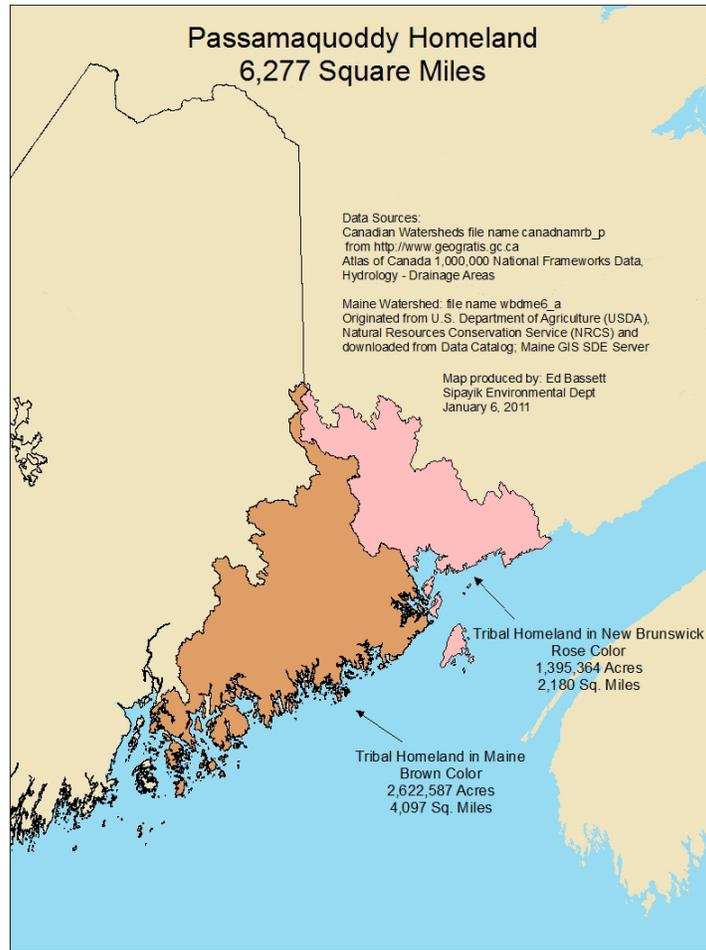
Culture: Merriam Webster on-line dictionary defines culture as: *“the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time..... a particular society that has its own beliefs, ways of life, art, etc.... a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization (such as a business).”*

Passamaquoddy Communities: The Passamaquoddy Tribe currently has 3,611 people on the tribal census rolls. Today, there are three distinct self-governing Passamaquoddy communities within the tribe's ancestral homeland. Two reservations are located in Maine (Pleasant Point and Indian Township) and the third located at St. Andrews New, Brunswick. Each of these tribal communities is separated by geography but they continue to maintain close political, social and kinship ties (*see map 1*).



(Map 1)

Passamaquoddy Homeland: The Passamaquoddy Traditional/Ancestral Homeland is about 6,277 square miles in size. Our Homeland is made up of a number of watersheds in between, (but not including), the Penobscot River in Maine and the St. John River in NB Canada (*see map 2*).



(Map 2)

Passamaquoddy Traditional Watersheds in Maine:

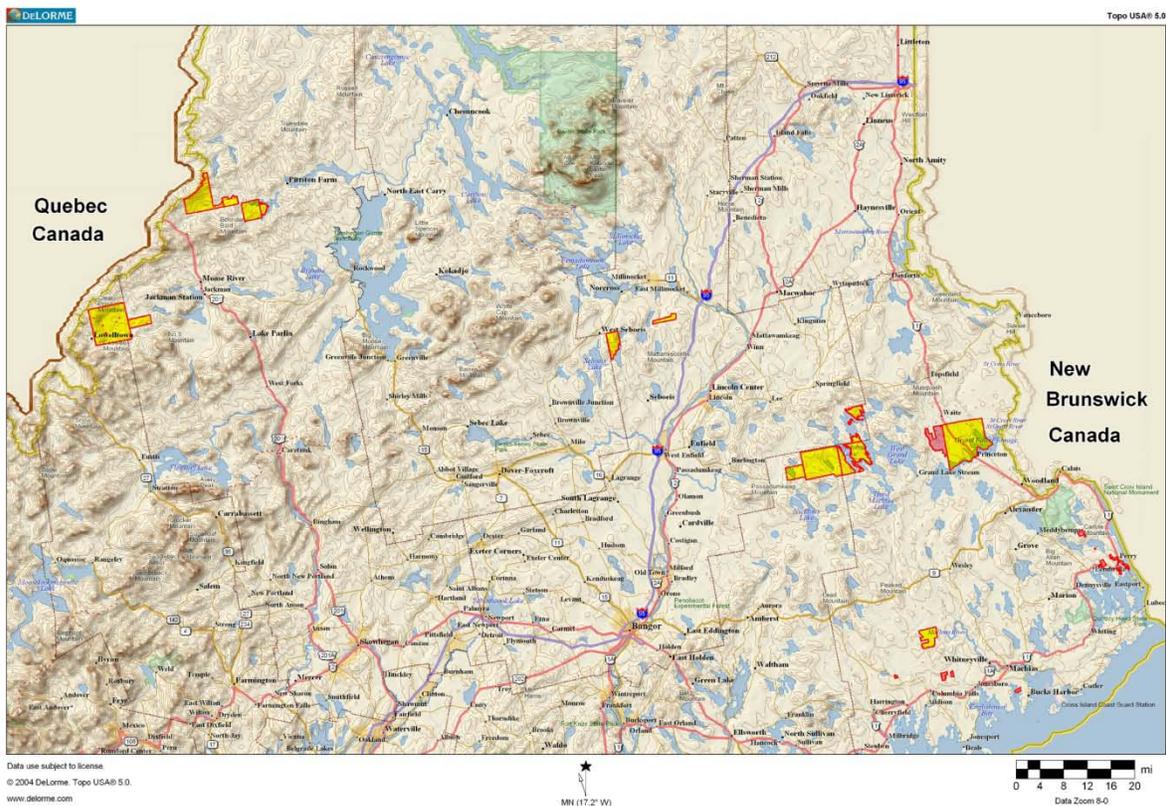
St Croix River	Little River	Pennamaquan River	Dennys River
Orange River	East Machias River	Machias River	Chandler River
Indian River	Pleasant River	Narraguagus River	Union River

Passamaquoddy Traditional Watersheds in New Brunswick:

Lepreau River	New River	Magaguadavic River	Digdeguash River
Letang River	Bonny River	Bocabec River	Waweig River

Each of the above listed watersheds is important to the Passamaquoddy offering its own unique natural history and connection to the tribe. Right in the heart-center of the Passamaquoddy homeland is the St. Croix River watershed (*see map 5*). This river, known in the historic past as the Schoodic River or Passamaquoddy River, has a million-acre watershed, (over 1600 square miles). It has been our home for thousands of years, and because the tribe maintains a physical presence within this watershed, it continues to provide us with physical, spiritual and emotional sustenance. It is in our interest to ensure that this river stays clean and productive for all future generations.

Federal Trust Land: In 1980 the United States, the Passamaquoddy Tribe and the State of Maine entered into an out-of-court land claim settlement agreement. This agreement enabled the tribe to purchase back a small portion of its land base, some of which is within our traditional homeland area. Currently, the tribe has about 118 thousand acres of land held in trust by the United States and about 10,000 acres of fee land in the state of Maine. Map 3 below shows the location of tribal lands in Maine (*trust lands in yellow*).



Map 3

Additional Background: A wise tribal elder once said, “*the Passamaquoddy culture and spirituality can be found in our language, everything is in the language.*” In pre-colonial times the tribal ancestor’s way-of-life was strong and communities flourished. The native tongue was spoken throughout the land and at the very core was a homogenous culture with ancient but strong values and beliefs. After enduring four centuries of encroachment from European cultures, the tribal culture, language and values are in jeopardy, some might say on the verge of extinction. Many of the younger generations below the age of 50 cannot speak Passamaquoddy fluently. It would be hard pressed to argue that our tribal culture has not been seriously transformed over the last 400 years. Even though many tribal elders still speak the tribal language there remains a deep feeling of loss for our *true* way-of-life. Every time an elder passes away he/she takes a piece of our culture and community with them.

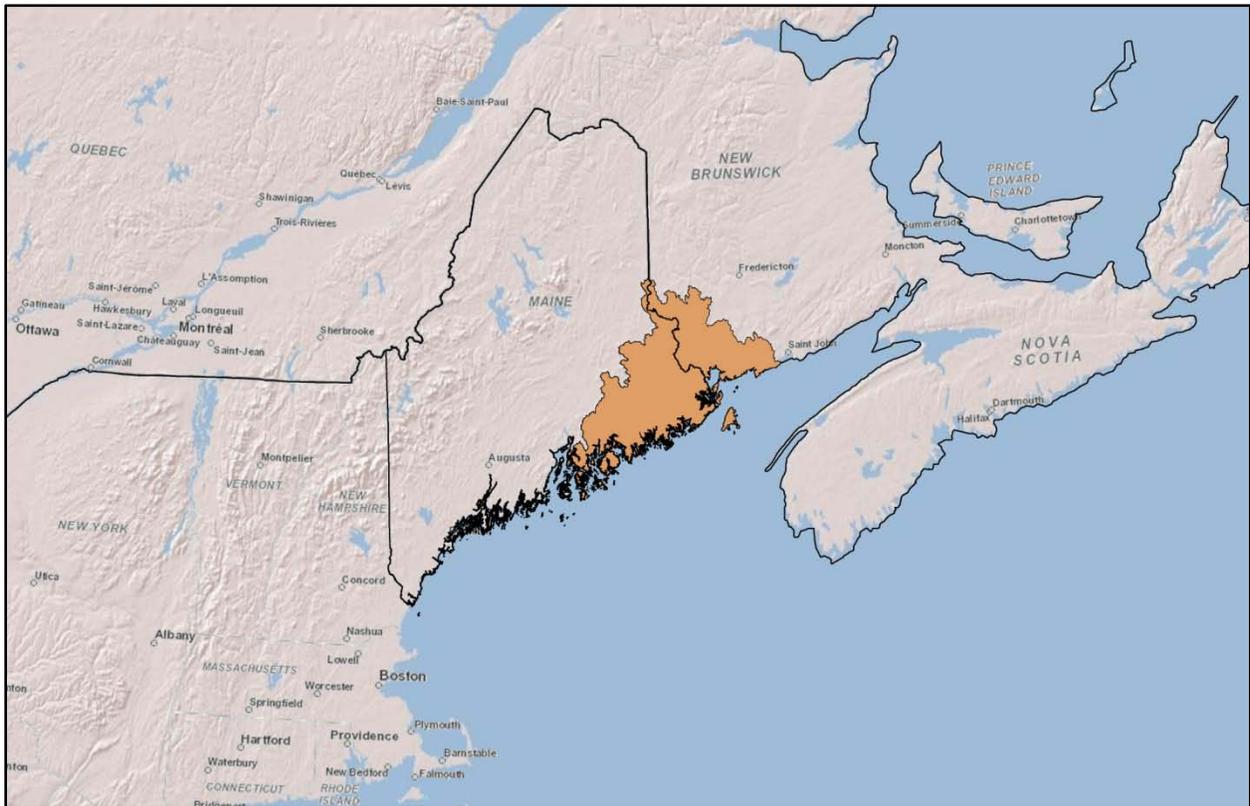
All Passamaquoddy people share the same cultural and historical background but, today there is a wide variety of different beliefs and values. Some Passamaquoddies do not hold the same understandings and cultural beliefs that are expressed in this paper. That is a measure of our loss.

The Passamaquoddy people have an indigenous culture and history that is very rich and deep and has been extensively written about. Writing about the cultural connection to the river herring is a challenge because these connections can be deeply emotional and spiritual. It is sometimes hard to put cultural ideas and concepts into words; however, it is now time to speak to this topic because the state of the environment is in such distress that it requires the attention of others. The river herring are one of the last species of wild, indigenous fish struggling for survival. Like the canary in the coal mine, declining numbers of river herring due to poor fishery management decisions and the observable harm to our watershed and coastal waters, they have an important warning for humanity to take action. And for that reason, the Passamaquoddy entered into a cooperative agreement with federal agencies to undo the harm of past management decisions and restore our watershed to its full potential.

In our culture it is difficult to single out any individual fish to describe its past, present or future *importance* to the Passamaquoddy People. This is because our cultural norms and values say

that all creatures great and small are equally important. Some creatures may be more or may be less prominent than others to the Passamaquoddy, but prominence or the lack thereof does not diminish nor enhance their significance. For example: the pollock is the fish from which the Passamaquoddy derive their tribal name. We are the people of the Pollock Place and are known for our skill of spearing pollock. This is an important part of who we are. The pollock are important to the Passamaquoddy but so are all other species of fish.

The Place of Our Homeland and History: To appreciate the importance of river herring one should first understand the importance of place - the place the Passamaquoddy call home. Below is *map 4* showing the location of the Passamaquoddy Ancestral Homeland.



Map 4: Passamaquoddy Ancestral Homeland is over 6,000 square miles in size.

The geography and environment of our homeland shaped our Passamaquoddy culture and way-of-life over a very long period of time....countless generations. These concepts of place and time often do not get talked about in our modern day conversations. Time....history....pre-history....ancient history..... the Passamaquoddy have occupied this location for at least 500 generations! This unbroken connection to our homeland and the creatures within our homeland

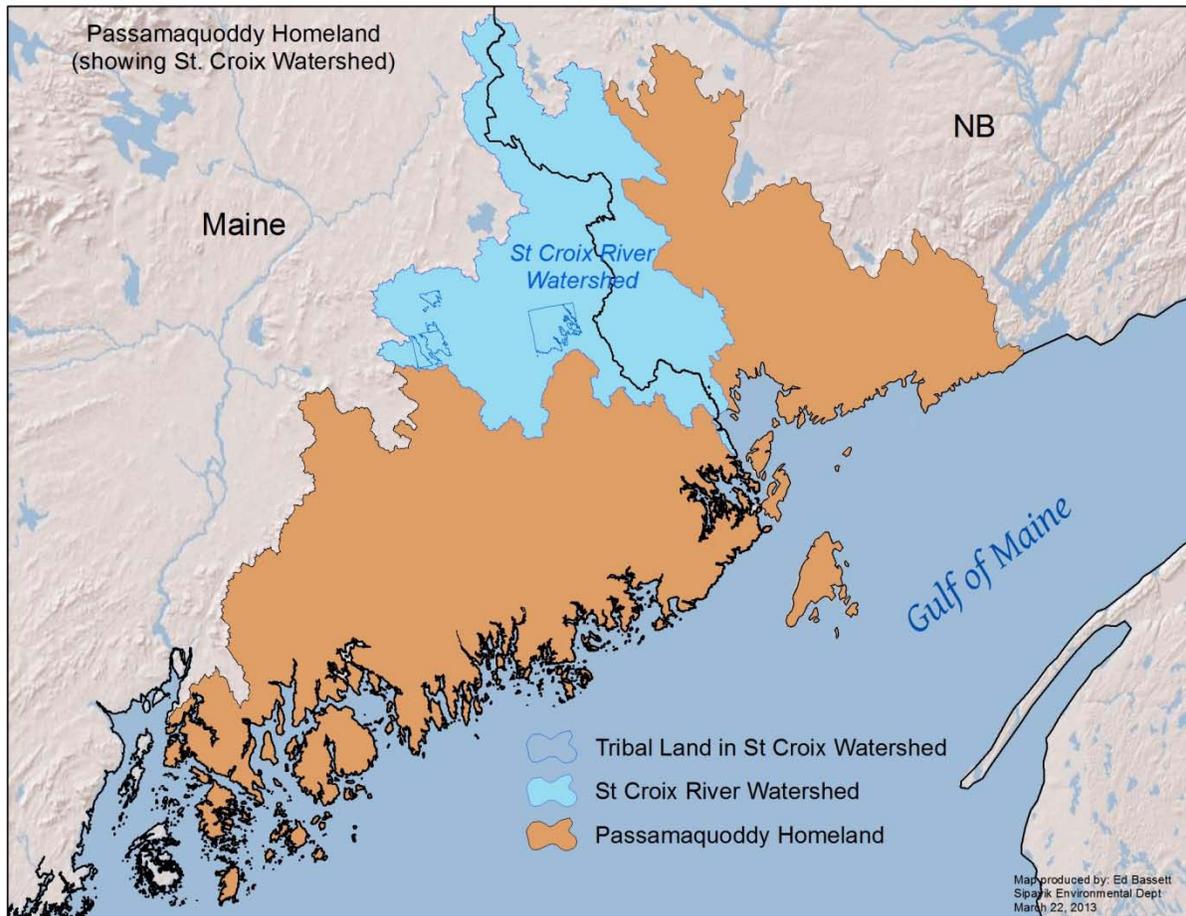
helped shaped the depth of our culture and the spirit of the people in untold and profound ways. Below you will find additional background about the place that the Peskotomuhkati People call home.

The Passamaquoddy are an indigenous group of people with ancient linguistic ties to the Algonquian language.⁽⁵⁾ Our traditional or ancestral homeland is located on the north-east seaboard of North America. Our culture and way-of-life has evolved over the thousands of years of living according to the natural rhythms and life cycles in nature. Our homeland offered the Passamaquoddy a rich and diverse environment... pristine woodlands, fertile valleys, mountains, islands, fresh water lakes, rivers, salt water estuaries and the ocean with incredible tides offering limitless supplies of food twice a day. Many of our ancestral villages were located at the mouths of rivers so that we could access the sea-run fish as they migrated back and forth from the ocean. We built strong and swift birch bark sailing canoes to travel across vast distances up and down the coast and we traveled across the deep sea. Like the mythic creator/hero Koluskap, our ancestors easily traveled across the Bay of Fundy to visit friends and relatives in Nova Scotia. The Passamaquoddy developed a strong and deep maritime based culture while maintaining our woodland and riverine connections. At certain times of the year much of our nourishment came from the marine environment and fish was a basic staple of our diet. Fish are deeply embedded into our creation stories⁽³²⁾.

Since time immemorial the Passamaquoddy people, living along side our neighboring Wabanaki tribes, hunted and fished on the waters of the land and the ocean. We built our canoes to travel and hunt porpoise, we built family dwellings and big community long-houses, made clothing from plants and animals to keep us warm, we drank from the pristine water of the streams and lakes, we grew vegetables such as corn, squash and beans for food, and tobacco for ceremonies, we gathered berries, fruits and medicines, made nets, built traps and fish weirs, fashioned spears, knives, arrows and other tools from wood, stone and bone, we made bows and we traded with our distant relatives for other goods. We preserved our foods so we could endure the long winters. All the things we ate came directly from our homeland and the ocean.

Our continued survival depended upon understanding the cycles of life in our homeland environment. And we were masters of the traditional technology that we developed. Another way to look at our longevity.....the Passamaquoddy have lived and flourished within our

homeland at the least since the time when the Laurentide Ice Glaciers ⁽⁶⁾ melted away from this part of North America, about 10 to 14 thousand years ago. And recently uncovered archaeological evidence at Pennfield, NB just 18 miles from Pleasant Point confirmed the presence of indigenous people in the Passamaquoddy region dating back 13,000 years ago!⁽⁷⁾



Map 5: Location of the St. Croix Watershed within the Passamaquoddy Homeland

The St Croix River: Flowing through the heart of the tribes' homeland is the Schoodic River (now known as the St. Croix) with a watershed/drainage area of just over one million acres. The headwaters of this watershed begins in the higher elevations about 80 miles inland and flow through many lakes, eventually converging into the main stem of the river and emptying into the Passamaquoddy Bay⁽³³⁾. For thousands of years the pristine waters of the St Croix provided the

perfect nursery/spawning grounds for millions of sea-run fish such as Atlantic Salmon, American Eel, American Shad and River Herring. These sea-run fish provided much needed food for all creatures great and small, including the Passamaquoddy people, returning much needed nutrients to the river.

The Passamaquoddy Name: The Passamaquoddy name is pronounced Peskotomuhkati ⁽⁸⁾ which is derived from the word Peskotom ⁽⁹⁾, the Pollock. The tribal name roughly translates to People of the Pollock. The abundance of Pollock and other food fish was most likely the reason why the Passamaquoddy people settled into this homeland (*see Plenty of Pollock below*). In addition to the pristine spawning grounds mentioned above, the Passamaquoddy Bay and neighboring West Isles Archipelago also provided an abundance of salt-water food fish due to the productivity of the deep, cold, strong upwelling currents. The productivity and amount of diversity of fish within the Passamaquoddy Bay region was truly magnificent, fitting the description of a “Garden of Eden.” ⁽¹⁰⁾ Nature provided everything the Passamaquoddy people needed to thrive. In this environment we developed an Indigenous Economy. ⁽¹¹⁾

Plenty of Lobster: The Pleasant Point peninsula is a traditional seasonal fishing village to the Passamaquoddy. Because of its unique location at the confluence of the Passamaquoddy and Cobscook Bays it was the perfect place to harvest salt water resources such as shell fish and other fish. There was a natural lobster breeding ground at the southeast tip of Pleasant Point. At low tide Passamaquoddies would wade into the tidal channel and harvest lobster. The causeway dyke that was constructed as part of the Quoddy Tidal Power Project, now serves as the state Route #190. ^(12, 13) The road/causeway was constructed right through the middle of the Pleasant Point village without tribal consent and completely destroyed this natural breeding ground. This causeway system connects several islands together in a chain now blocking about seven miles of natural tidal flow between the two bays. It prevents fish from migrating and some say it has diminished the intensity of the “Old Sow” whirlpool between Eastport, Maine and Deer Island, NB. In addition to the destruction of the tidal ecosystem the causeway serves as the only road in and out of the town of Eastport, Maine and has had many other serious safety and disruptive effects on the tribal culture and way of life similar to the fate of the non-human species, our relatives.

Plenty of Pollock: Pleasant Point also was the perfect place to catch Pollock. Some tribal elders still alive today tell of the days in the past when they took part or witnessed the seasonal Pollock harvest. Up until the 1950's, during spring and summer large schools of Pollock would chase smaller fish into the shallow waters along the shore of Pleasant Point. The water would be boiling with thousands of fish in a feeding frenzy. Many community members would come down to the beach and wade into the water and simply grab the large Pollock by hand or with a pitch fork and then fill everyone's baskets. The whole community was able to eat fresh Pollock or preserve it for the winter use. This annual community fishing event stopped happening sometime in the 1950's. Many blame overfishing as the cause.

Connection to Place: We the direct descendents of our Passamaquoddy ancestors feel a deep and personal connection to our past. We understand that countless generations of Passamaquoddy people have lived and have died in our homeland. The legacy we have inherited from our ancestors is deeply rooted in our pristine and fertile homeland and embedded in our spirit.

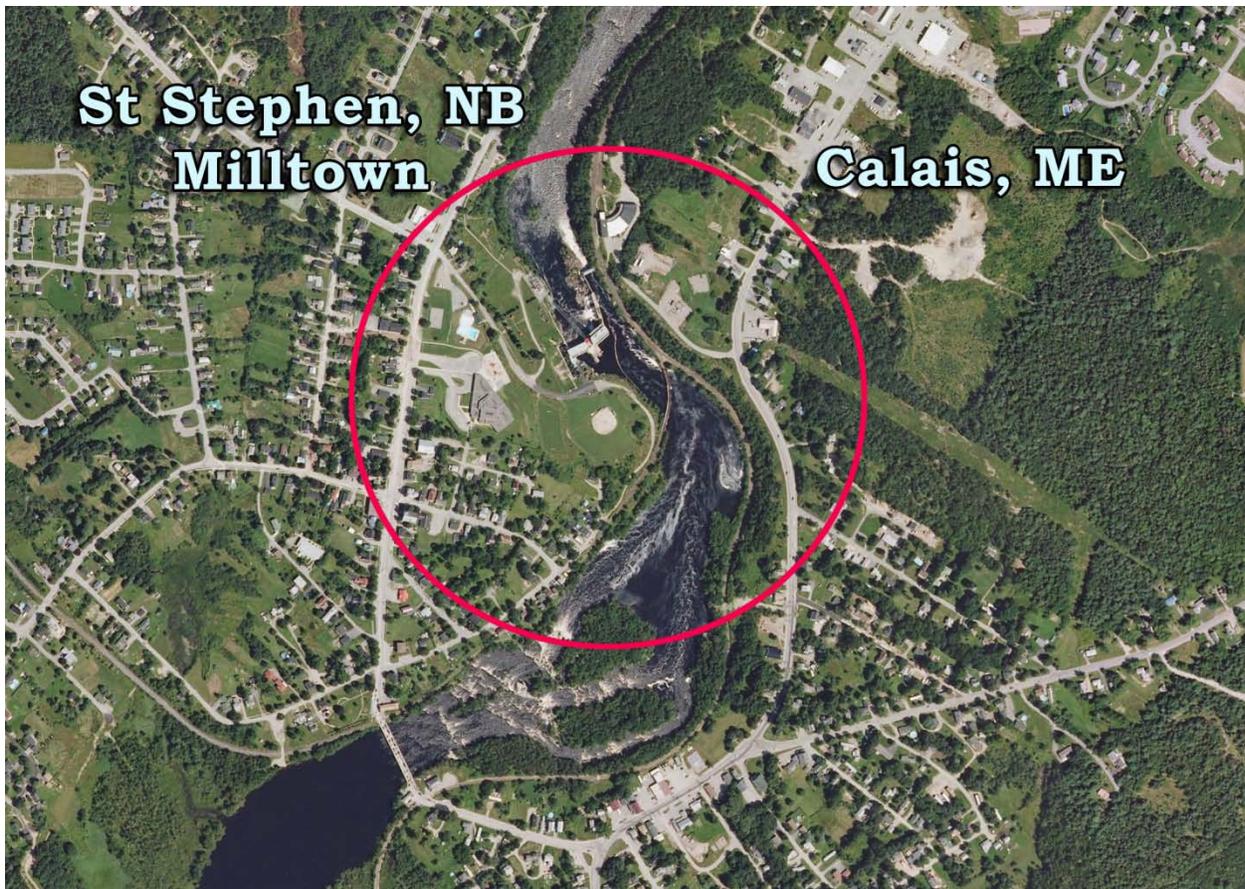
Capitalism, globalization and modern technology have radically changed our indigenous economy and way-of-life over the last 500 years (about 25 generations). Our homeland has suffered much destruction and massive exploitation ⁽¹⁴⁾. The Passamaquoddy culture has suffered the onslaught of modern changes as well. Today much of our food comes from the supermarket and our lifestyle has changed drastically. Many of the young people only hear stories of the ways of the past; however, many are not satisfied with the status quo and do not want our tribe nor the sacred environment to be lost in antiquity nor be considered a product of a long forgotten era. We do not wish to join the species already at risk.

There is a re-awakening happening today. The youth are seeking out their identity and their roots. They want to understand who they are and where they came from. They are beginning to practice some of their ancient ceremonies. The modern culture of materialism is not satisfying their desire to feed their souls. They hear the old stories about how our ancestors lived and they dream of a healthier environment and way-of-life. They want to raise their children to feel grounded with a sense of connection to who they are. They know their ancestors are buried within the surrounding hills, islands and valleys and their history and culture is sacred to them. They want to strengthen their connection, because they hear the whisper of their ancestors in the wind and in their heart.

Loss of Connection: There is an ancient Passamaquoddy fishing village known as "Siquoniw Utenehsis" located at the head of tide near the mouth of the St. Croix River. This village spans the banks on both sides of the river in what is now known as the City of Calais, Maine and St. Stephen, NB, just 20 miles north of Pleasant Point. It is at the head-of-tide, more commonly known as Salmon Falls where the fresh river water and salt water meet. (see maps below)



Map 6: Location of the ancient Passamaquoddy Fishing Village of Siquoniw Utenehsis at the mouth of the St. Croix River.



Map 7: Air photo showing approximate location of the Passamaquoddy Fishing Village Siqoniw Utenehsis. This site has been completely altered with city development and a power dam.

At this fishing village the Passamaquoddy people would converge each year to capture sea-run fish. This was a major source of food for the people. In the 1700's the Passamaquoddy were forcibly driven out of the village by European settlers. Settlers were then able to seize control over the fish at this village site and began to exploit the fish resources for their own purposes, which included worldwide market consumption.

City development along both banks of the river and commercial exports of the natural resources such as wood and fish forever altered the St Croix River. Industrial saw mills, tanneries and dams were built all along the river and soon the river became choked off and toxic and the fish began to die off. To escape this encroachment and destruction many Passamaquoddy families relocated to other village sites but some continued to live in Calais and St Stephen. Today this ancestral village has been completely destroyed. Some parts are now under water and flooded by

the Milltown power dam. Now roads, homes and other buildings are built on top of our village and the nearby ancestral burial grounds.

The new USA-Canadian governments have imposed a boundary right down the middle of the St. Croix River and now the tribal homeland is cut in half by this international border.

Passamaquoddies continue to reside in both countries on each side of this border river - the river that once united the Passamaquoddy People is now used to divide us.

River Herring Uses: River Herring is a traditional food fish for the Passamaquoddy. Nature provided a variety of food fish for the Passamaquoddy people especially during the annual fish migrations. Using various technologies such as fish weirs, fish traps, nets and spears the Passamaquoddy easily secured enough food fish to feed the entire village. During the spring and early summer migrating river herring would be caught at the various traditional fishing locations along the banks of the river. Fish not eaten immediately would be smoked for preservation and stored for winter and some of the river herring would be used as fertilizer in the tribal vegetable gardens. River herring is still eaten and used for gardens today by some Passamaquoddy people.

Other Prehistoric Villages and Archaeological Sites: History and science tells us that alewives were probably in every stream flowing out of a lake or pond in the Gulf of Maine region unless blocked by impassable waterfalls ⁽¹⁵⁾. Archaeologists determined that river herring have been present as far as 80 miles inland in the upper headwaters of the St Croix at a place called Mud Lake Stream. This is another ancient fishing village site used by Passamaquoddy ancestors 4,000 years ago ⁽¹⁶⁾. Our ancestors were cooking and eating river herring back then.

Traditional Diet and Cultural Connection: Much has changed in the traditional diet of the Passamaquoddy over the recent past. The Passamaquoddy have been unable to maintain their traditional diet because of the changes that have occurred over the past 400 years. The traditional food sources of the Passamaquoddy have been so seriously disrupted, depleted and/or damaged forcing the Passamaquoddy people to adopt a non-traditional diet by necessity. This forced evolution into the world-wide food market system has been linked to serious health problems for the native people such as diabetes, obesity, cardio pulmonary disease, cancers, etc ⁽³⁹⁾.

Our traditional food fishery sources and our natural homeland environment are altered beyond recognition and many of our food sources have either been depleted or have become too toxic for consumption. Much of the pristine waters are polluted, the fish habitat and spawning grounds damaged from development or flooded by dams, invasive and exotic species of fish have invaded the natural habitats of indigenous fish. Today the traditional food fishery of the Passamaquoddy cannot sustain the people.

Access to our traditional food sources have been negatively impacted in a wide variety of ways. In fact many tribal members have been threatened with arrest or prosecuted in court as criminals for attempting to fish. One tribal chief recently stated:

“Remember the abuse of fisheries management making it criminal for the Passamaquoddy to harvest while protecting the ‘resource’ for industry and others often creating a source of wealth feeding off our poverty...for this may be the single most important factor in the decimation of both our tribe and the creatures we depend upon” (40)

There are many tribal members who believe we must try to reverse the damage that has been done to the homeland ecosystem and work to bring back the indigenous food fishery. The Passamaquoddy Tribal Government believes it is important enough to try. (17, 18) Native prophecies and stories tell us that we must protect the earth, the animals and our old ways of life, such as hunting, trapping, fishing, planting, food preservation, medicinal plants etc., because there will be a time when the people will need these things again in the future for survival. (19, 20)

Many of our ancestral fishing villages have been flooded or destroyed and the traditional wild food fish resources now regulated due to toxicity and scarcity making it almost impossible for Passamaquoddies to return to their traditional diet. Even though many Passamaquoddy people no longer eat the traditional foods as a regular food staple many still try to incorporate as much wild foods into their diet as possible because they know it is healthy.

Through the simple act of fishing, securing and eating our traditional food fish many Passamaquoddies believe this helps strengthen identity and cultural/ancestral connections. For some there is a deeply felt spiritual connection when we take the life of the fish for sustenance

and survival. In return and appreciation the tribal tradition is to honor the sacrifice of the fish through ceremony/ritual...it is part of who we are.

The Fish That Feeds All: River Herring (alewife and blueback herring) have been called a keystone species ⁽²¹⁾. Science has confirmed this species of fish to be of significant importance to the whole food chain in the larger ecosystem. Each year this sea-run fish migrates up into the fresh headwaters bringing rich marine nutrients into the fresh water system from the sea. This annual migration provides much needed food for a multitude of living creatures ranging from the smallest bacteria, invertebrates and insects to plant life, other fish and countless animals including some of the top predators such as the eagle, the bear and other mammals. River herring are a critical link in the food web. ⁽²²⁾

The river herring are one of the few species of fish, along with sea herring and mackerel that provide a high concentration of calories for foraging marine mammals due to their rich fatty oils. The porpoise, seal and whale are some of the marine mammals that need the abundance of migrating alewife during emerging spring when they give birth and are nursing their young. Marine mammal mothers need access to plenty of these high caloric fish, such as the alewife, to produce nutrient rich milk for their young. During the spring the mother porpoise and whales cannot afford to stress her body wasting precious energy hunting for enough fish to eat ⁽²³⁾.

Porpoise and whale have a special place of honor in the Passamaquoddy culture. The Passamaquoddy still hunt porpoise and are eaten as a traditional food at certain community gatherings and ceremonial functions. Many have become aware that porpoise may contain unsafe levels of mercury and may be unsafe to eat, especially the organs. The tribe does not recommend porpoise be consumed by children nor women of child-bearing age due to the possible bio-accumulative toxicity of mercury. The whale is an important mythical and spiritual being in the history and folklore of the tribe ⁽²⁴⁾.

Traditional Wisdom and Knowledge meets Modern Science: According to Passamaquoddy traditional knowledge all things in nature are connected and related. A more common term is the web-of-life which describes and is understood as the interconnectedness of all things. The tribal concept is almost identical to the modern scientific concept of “ecosystem or ecosystem

ecology.”⁽²⁵⁾ What we do to any part of the food web has an effect other parts of the food web.⁽²⁶⁾

In addition to providing much needed nutrients to the ecosystem the river herring also play a little known but important role in keeping fresh water clean! During their migration the river herring act as transportation host for the larvae of the fresh water floater mussel. The tiny larvae attach themselves to the gills and scales of the river herring as they swim up river to spawn. In essence they hitch-a-ride on the unwitting fish and then are deposited into the upper headwater lakes and ponds to grow into adult mussels. They live out their life cycle filtering billions of gallons of water keeping the lakes and ponds clean. Without the river herring these floater mussels would be unable to move up river into the headwaters to fulfill their natural life cycle and purpose.^(27, 22)

We are now standing at the threshold of understanding that Passamaquoddy Traditional Knowledge (PTK) and modern science can complement each other. Concepts such as ecosystem, connectivity, restoration, balance and interdependence are also Passamaquoddy traditional concepts. Our culture and stories tell us that we have kinship with all life and that we take only what we need from nature (conservation). What we do to nature today can have an effect in the future. Some call this the Butterfly Effect.⁽²⁸⁾ The task is to recognize when traditional knowledge can complement science and to work together to improve the quality of life for the benefit of the ecosystem and for all our future generations.

River Herring Population in St Croix: Pre colonial estimates of the numbers of spawning river herring migrating into the St Croix River watershed has been anywhere between 20 to 40 million fish per year. Science has estimated that the carrying capacity of the St Croix is anywhere between 11 and 23 million river herring depending on production levels desired. *See table 1, St Croix River Alewife Habitat/Production Above Milltown*⁽²⁾.

Adult River Herring Returns in St Croix River: As mentioned above, thousands of years ago the Passamaquoddy established deep roots in the St Croix River valley. The millions of fish in this fertile river helped our people survive for thousands of years.

The fishery of this river was so important to the tribe that a fishing provision was specifically written into the 1794 treaty between the Tribe and the Colonial government of Massachusetts. This same 1794 treaty was incorporated into the Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980.

In the early 1800's the Passamaquoddy became concerned about the destruction of the fishery in the St Croix River. We were concerned about the destructive effect caused by development coming into the river valley such as dams with no fishways, pollution and overfishing. In 1821, one year after the State of Maine became a state, the tribe sent a petition to the Maine State legislature asking Maine to pass laws to preserve and protect the fish in both branches of the St Croix River. Maine did pass some protective laws but the problems continued.

In 1981 the Canadians built a new fishway at the Milltown power dam and all river herring passing through the Milltown fishway have been counted each year since 1981. In 2002 the productivity of the magnificent St Croix bottomed out and hit an all time low with only 900 adult alewife returns. *See table 2, Adult Alewife Returns At Milltown* ⁽²⁾.

Economic Conditions, Survival and Commercial Fisheries: For millennia the Passamaquoddy way-of-life was to hunt, fish, trap and gather food and medicine and to employ the natural resources of the environment to sustain our communities. Over the past 400 years the encroachment and degradation of the resources in our homeland forced Passamaquoddies to adapt forcing a shift away from our traditional indigenous economy. We had to find alternative ways to survive and to feed our families. Colonial influences and capitalism became major forces the Passamaquoddy had to contend with. We witnessed the extermination of many of our neighboring tribal communities ^(35,36). Faced with the same threats the Passamaquoddies had to adapt in order to survive or suffer a similar fate as our neighbors. This process of adaptation was an assimilation that drastically altered the culture and way-of-life of the tribe ⁽³⁴⁾. Today tribal members need money for survival, we need good jobs. There is still enormous pressure upon the new generations to obtain a college education, find a good job and assimilate into the dominant societal way of life to raise their families. Many tribal members end up moving away from the reservation to build their future and many lose interest in the traditional ways of life. These pressures are changing the tribal culture even today. Opportunity and economic conditions on the reservation are not good for many tribal members. Many still desire to fish and hunt like their ancestors did.

Passamaquoddies did not cause the degradation of the ecosystem and did not cause the depletion of fishery resources therefore the Passamaquoddy People should not be penalized when trying to access the fish and exercise their inherent right to fish. Passamaquoddies firmly believe we should be free to pursue our cultural and traditional ways, such as hunting and fishing.

Recognizing the positive potential in commercial fishing to provide a livelihood and that fishing for survival is a traditional activity many tribal members have taken a renewed interest in fishing for a living. Many want to get off welfare and learn how to fish so they can provide for their family. The tribe is now attempting to build a viable fisheries program for tribal members. The tribe believes that it is time for the federal, state and provincial governments to recognize and assist the Passamaquoddy with exercising our inherent right to fish.

Passamaquoddy Efforts Toward Fisheries Restoration: In 2011 a dedicated group of Passamaquoddies known as the Schoodic Riverkeepers, organized themselves to help reverse the destruction of the Passamaquoddy Homeland and restore the food fishery. The Riverkeepers saw that this destruction to the ecosystem was also destroying the cultural connections and the institutional memory of the Passamaquoddy. Some of our elders forgot about the importance of the river herring. This was due to the generational damage perpetrated upon the indigenous fish from dams with no fishways and other invasive developments as mentioned above. The first task of the Riverkeepers was to help restore sea-run alewife to their native spawning grounds in the headwaters of the St Croix above Grand Falls dam. The Riverkeepers joined forces with many friends of the alewife to educate and change the misconceptions and misinformation about alewife ⁽²⁹⁾. There was a need to change the false narrative that has been spread for many years to a more appropriate cultural based perspective. With the help of the Schoodic Riverkeepers the tribal community and tribal leaders began to understand the truth about the alewife, the truth about the St Croix River and the truth about the destruction of the ecosystem. Soon thereafter the Passamaquoddy Tribal Government embraced and adopted a firm and official position in favor of restoration of all sea-run fish ⁽³⁰⁾ and restoration of the once Magnificent Schoodic River ⁽³¹⁾. The Schoodic Riverkeepers and tribal government appreciate the dedicated work and commitment from our friends to help bring back the river herring. Many thanks to the BIA, NOAA, USF&W, EPA, the NGO's and all the individuals who cared enough to support the tribe

and the river herring ⁽²⁹⁾. There is a lot more work to be done. Let's not forget about the Atlantic Salmon, the Shad and the Eel for these fish are also important food fish.

The environment and various ecosystems within the Passamaquoddy Ancestral Homelands have shaped and formed the tribes' language and culture over thousands of years. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) gathered and stored in the tribe's institutional memory provided the tribe with the necessary skills not just to survive but to thrive in the homeland for countless generations. Despite the use of science and countless written laws, the governments of the United States, Canada, State of Maine and Province of New Brunswick have failed to fulfill their role as trustees and stewards of the environment. The productivity of the homeland has not been kept intact and has had a harmful effect on the tribal way-of-life and culture. Environmental Justice ⁽³⁸⁾ is needed to bring back the river herring and other fish and to restore this once pristine land and waters to its productive potential for the continued survival of future generations of Passamaquoddy.

Passamaquoddy Culture and the Settlement Act: In 1980 the Passamaquoddy were concerned that the Indian Claims Settlement Act might harm the tribes' culture. Senator Melcher ⁽³⁷⁾, Chairperson of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee wrote in his report.....

“Nothing in the Settlement provides for acculturation, nor is it the intent of Congress to disturb the culture or integrity of the Indian people of Maine. To the contrary, the settlement offers protections against this result being imposed by outside entities by providing for tribal governments which are separate and apart from the towns and cities of the State of Maine and which control all internal matters.” *Senator Melcher, Report to the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, Authorizing Funds for the Settlement on Indian Claims in the State of Maine, S. 2829, Report Number 95, 95th Cong., 2nd Session, September 17, 1980.*

Finally, many thanks go out to the river herring which we call *Siqonomeq*. After all it was the plight of the river herring, the fish that feeds all, that became the catalyst that brought all this together and will help strengthen our cultural connection to our homeland and the fish.

Woliwon - Thank You

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