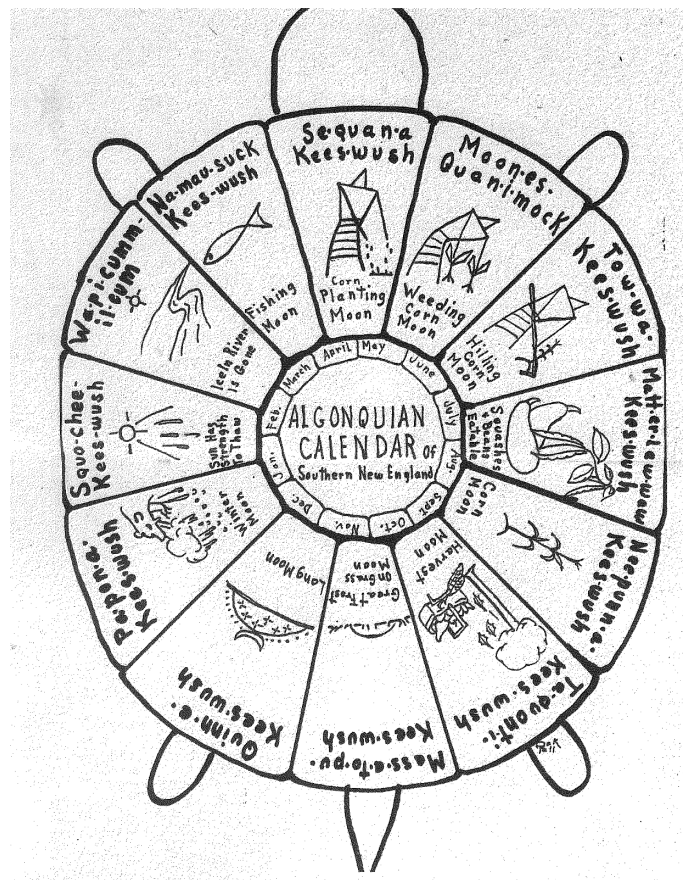


# EDUCATION NEWS

Where History is Shared and Stories Continue

Kunoopeam Netompaûog, Welcome Friends!

This year, the education department at Tomaquag Museum will be focusing on traditional moons and thanksgivings of which there are 13 according to the Indigenous calendar. Did you know that the 13 squares on a turtles back represent the 13 moons, and the 28 smaller squares around the edges are the days leading to the next moon? This is how some Indigenous peoples kept time.



Moons Calendar by Everett "Tall Oak" Weeden ca. 1970s-80s;  
courtesy of Tomaquag Archives

Click here to [Contact](#) the education department with any questions.

## *FROM TOMAQUAG'S EDUCATION DEPARTMENT...*

Everett Weeden, "Tall Oak" (traditional name), a Narragansett elder, hand drew a version of the moons and their intersection with the English calendar months. He entitled it "Algonquian Calendar of Southern New England." Notice that during the months of April-September there are continuous references to corn showing the many moons cycles from the planting of corn to its harvesting. This current August neepunnakéeswush (summer month) will present two full moons. The first at the beginning of the 28 day cycle is by some Indigenous communities called thunder moon or neimpâuog nanepaûshat in the Narragansett language. During the thunder moon many will celebrate Green Corn Thanksgiving (the new ear growth) and the second moon occurring over the 28 days following is the corn moon or ewáchimneash nanepaûshat in the Narragansett language; the time when much of the corn is in full growth and ready for picking.



Green Corn (or new corn) July 31, 2023

For many of these moons past, Narragansetts gathered in ceremony to ask Creator to bless the cornfields and thank him for good growing weather and a bountiful crop as this would be the main food source to carry the people through the cold months to come. Villages would gather for ceremony followed by a feast, and there would be music, dancing, games, and stories shared.

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In 1935 Red Wing wrote about it stating, “At many Indian gatherings, about this time of the year, up to the harvest time, members of different eastern tribes will dance the Corn Dance, or what is remembered of it. As time wears on, some steps are lost, some are added. It is a religious dance calling the Great Spirit to bless the cornfields and to give thanks for proper growing weather. Tradition reaches far back with this dance and has many stories. One very old Indian told us and seemed to join it to the legend of the morning star. So much of the tradition have we” (Narragansett Dawn Vol. 1, August, 1935, pps. 96-98). Click [here](#) to read the legend.

The Narragansett people have faced changes and challenges to their traditional ways of living ever since conquest and colonization in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their reciprocal relationship with the natural world around was fundamental to living and was affected greatly as the landscape changed. Not only the introduction by colonists of new flora and fauna, but the laws around use of the native natural resources and the limitations imposed cause hardships in gathering materials for their dwellings as well as agricultural practices. Another blow came in In 1882 when the State of Rhode Island held a final sale of Narragansett lands and detribalized them with only two and a half acres allowed to remain in their possession to be held communally by tribal citizens. This acreage is the grounds where the Narragansett Indian Church resides in Charlestown, RI. Despite these challenges and because of their resilience and perseverance, Narragansetts living throughout this state and all across this country gathered for the green corn thanksgiving which became a time for family and community reunion providing a place of continuation throughout the generations. It also provided an opportunity for tribal leaders to discuss the ever changing laws affecting their continuous efforts to pursue their rights as the Indigenous people of this state. Read a greeting from Chief Sachem Philip Peckham in 1935 as he welcomed everyone to this annual event.

## GREETINGS FROM THE CHIEF SACHEM OF THE NARRAGANSETT TRIBE.

At this time I wish to welcome each and every one to our Annual August Meeting which is always held the second Sunday in August. Real old-fashioned spiritual meetings will be held at 10 A. M. and 2 P. M. We expect the noted Indian preacher Rev. LeRoy C. Perry, Ousa Mequin-Yellow Feather, Wampanoag. He has preached here at these and other occasions for several years and everyone will be anxious to hear him.

This month should be of particular interest to every Narragansett Indian as the most historical record ever made will be made this month for our tribe. The Narragansetts have been in the background heretofore but as the last shall be first, so we are now at the dawn of great recognition. WE were always kind and sympathetic to strangers, and those traits are at last realized by a great many. It was the Narragansetts that Roger Williams found here in Rhode Island and there are still Narragansetts here living on our native land. Of the historical record I speak of none other than the Olympic No. 1 Man, Ellison Myer Brown (Tarzon) who is a Narragansett Indian and I know he will return from the Olympics with the laurels that will mean champion of the world in Marathon. What could be more fitting than to have one of our very own tribesman win this race. He deserves all the honor and praise he will receive as he has climbed the ladder of fame under difficulties and often alone, which tells for itself the strength of character of a Narragansett Indian. *The Indian Still Lives!*

by PHILIP H. PECKHAM

Greeting of Sachem Philip Peckham; Narragansett Dawn, Vol. 2, Aug. 1936, No, 4, p. 67;  
URI Digital Archives



Narragansett persistence and resilience enabled them to make adaptations in order for traditions to carry on in new and evolved ways. Powwows throughout this country have become intertribal and an occasion for Indigenous artists to vend their beautiful creations and for dancers to compete while still honoring cultural heritage and teaching the next generations of children about their ancestral life ways. The Narragansett Indian Powwow, now in its 348<sup>th</sup> **recorded** year on August 12 and 13, 2023, will commence with grand entry where flag bearers, Sachem and Tribal Council, and dancers from elders to tiny tots being introduced, arrayed in their finest regalia representing eastern war, men's and women's fancy, men's and women's traditional, grass, smoke, and so many more will display a beautiful and vibrant culture still alive.



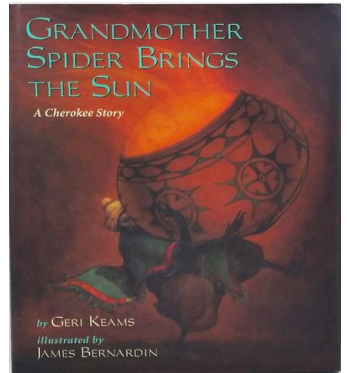
*~Chrystal Mars Baker for August 2023*

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## FOR THE CHILDREN:

There are many stories shared by various Indigenous communities that have been passed down through the generations. Often these stories are the same regionally but are told differently from community to community. In the book, “Grandmother Spider Brings The Sun” you will read one of these traditional stories. It is a creation story.

You can create as well. First, you will need some clay. But don’t rush off to the store, make your own! I used to make this clay for my children all the time when they were young. It works and they enjoyed shaping it and painting their finished, dried product.



Click this [link](#) for the recipe.

Once you have your clay made, try shaping it into a small “pot” like the one on the book cover. It’s called a “pinch pot” because all you have to do is pinch your ball of clay with your thumbs in the middle and your fingers all around the outside forming the shape. You may want to get help from an adult but it’s fun to try it yourself first. And remember, clay is made to be shaped and molded over and over until you get it how you want it! That’s the fun of working with clay.

Did you know that the Narragansett people made their own clay? Many many moons ago, before there were so many houses, schools, sidewalks and other buildings, there were natural clay deposits in the river beds, bogs and along ocean cliffs of Rhode Island. Clay is a type of soil, a natural resource, that was mixed with crushed shell (another natural resource!) and other natural ingredients including water. Out of these resources, the Narragansetts would form and shape pinch pots, seed pots and large vessels for storing food and holding liquid. Their vessels were so well done, that they were also used for cooking in! Clay was also used to form beads that were strung and worn as adornment (jewelry). They even made pipes out of clay that would be smoked during ceremony.

## RESOURCES:

At Tomaquag we are continuously doing the work of educating new generations of children as well as the general public about the lives, traditions and life changes of the Indigenous peoples of Rhode Island and neighboring communities. Follow us on our website at [tomaquagmuseum.org](http://tomaquagmuseum.org), [Youtube](#) and [Facebook](#). Check out these resources!

To support Indigenous authors and purchase your own copy of Grandmother Spider... visit this [link](#):

To hear an animated version of the book read aloud visit this [link](#):