

EDUCATION NEWS

Kunoopeam, Welcome Readers!

Storytelling Moon is upon us! Remember, the 13 moons do not fit into a 12 month calendar so Storytelling Moon would be around January and February. It's the season of papone (winter) the coldest time of the year. We don't have to travel back in time to picture Native elders, parents, children, many generations sitting in their wetoumash (houses) under the glow of the Storytelling Moon, for we are still doing this! I recently sat in the living room of my eldest aunt and uncle along with my mother, siblings, many cousins, nieces, nephews and my own children carrying on this timeless tradition. We shared stories, memories, songs and gave honor to our loved ones who have passed on. Multi-generations sharing time and space on a cold winter evening is what we have always done and will continue to do.



Tomaquag Assistant Director and Cultural Educator Silvermoon LaRose provides a storytelling program to school children in 2022.

FROM TOMAQUAG'S EDUCATION DEPARTMENT...

Gathering together to share stories can be fun and entertaining, but it is so much more than that. Through this intergenerational practice, we are able to pass down our history, values, knowledge, and spiritual beliefs. These stories connect us to our ancestors and create a legacy of memory and learning to pass on to future generations. Stories become the tie that binds all generations in shared culture and tradition. During the storytelling moon, we honor our stories and our story keepers, those who hold these memories and share them with others so they are never forgotten.

There are many Indigenous storytellers across Turtle Island. I asked a few of them to share why they wanted to become storytellers, how long have they been sharing stories and why are stories important to them. Here are a few of their responses:

Larry Spotted Crow Mann (Nipmuc) shared, "I have always heard stories from aunts, uncles and grandparents growing up. There is sacred knowledge in our stories. Everything we needed, learned and used to have a high quality of life came through our stories. Our stories are the land and the land is the stories. We as Indigenous



Larry Spotted Crow Mann presents at Tomaquag Museum in 2022.

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

Peoples were forced to learn the stories and history of Europeans. We were taught not to speak our language and tell our stories. It nearly destroyed us. Our people were lost and their identity whitewashed. But when we are able to share our stories, our people are able to connect back to who they are. And with that, engender a positive outcome for their lives in this 21 century experience.”



Annawon Weeden performs at
Tomaquag Museum's 2019 Annual
Honoring Celebration

Annawon Weeden (Mashpee Wampanoag) said he started sharing stories, “since becoming a parent”. He said the reason was, “because Mashpee has some of the greatest stories, legends & overall history. It made me overwhelmed with pride & connections. I began telling stories to my children, then the world made me realize how valuable our oral history is to others.” And stories are important to him because, “they define who we are. Stories were often told to teach. Such as morals, pain or loss others experience. It also allows us to transcend time. Stories are told through our arts, clothing, tools because we have so much knowledge to be passed on and so many ways to show appreciation for all our resources too.”

When asked these same questions, **Melissa Tantequidgeon Zobel (Mohegan)** shared, “I also spent many private hours with Aunt “Glady” (Gladys Tantequidgeon, great Aunt) & Uncle “Tom” (Harold Tantaquidgeon, great Uncle) during which they shared ancient stories...”. “The Tantaquidgeon’s stories...many as old as memory...all connected.” “My first real public storytelling came one day when I was a teen.” Melissa wanted to become a storyteller, “to preserve those much-maligned ancient Indigenous New England lifeways and philosophies” and “because of aggressive mainstream attempts at the erasure of our true stories...”. Why are stories important? “To protect and steward this land, we must truly connect to it, which requires learning its ancient Indigenous stories...”

I thank these storytellers for sharing their stories and much more with me so I could pass their stories on to you, the readers. To learn more about these storytellers check out their published works or look for them on youtube. I have posted some links in the resources section below.

FOR THE CHILDREN:

Peoples lives are stories too! We want to recognize and appreciate stories written by or about them. There are many Indigenous storytellers and writers who share about their culture, life experiences or the experiences of others. Some stories are based on truth and some can be completely made up for fun or to share a life lesson. Stories come in all forms and are great to hear orally or read from a book! This month’s story is the book entitled, “Classified, The Secret Career of Mary Golda Ross, Cherokee Aerospace Engineer” written by Traci Sorell and illustrated by Natasha Donovan . The intent of this true story is to help us understand how Mary never let herself feel too small, or too defeated, and kept herself strong through her Cherokee values. **Join virtually on February 11 at 9:30 as Chrystal reads aloud this story.** After, there will be a fun craft to make!

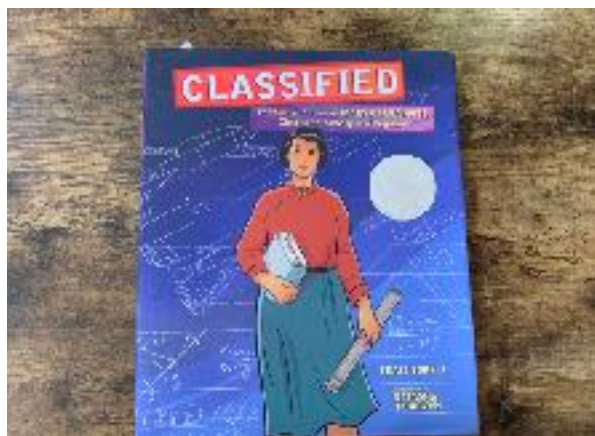
Click here to [Contact](#) the education department with any questions.

But just in case you cannot join then, you can find this book read aloud on youtube (see link below). And if you want to own the book, check out the resources below to see where you can purchase your own copy!

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, [Youtube](#) and [facebook](#). Check out these resources!

To watch a reading of “Classified” visit this link: https://youtu.be/ZdmH_D_qxE



To purchase your own copy of this book visit this link: https://birchbarkbooks.com/products/classified?_pos=1&_sid=8723c282c&_ss=r

For more about Larry Spotted Crow Mann visit this link: <http://www.whisperingbasket.com/>

For more about Annawon Weeden there are many sites to visit. Simply type “Annawon Weeden” into your web browser or into the youtube search bar.

And for more about Melissa Tantequidgeon visit this link: <https://www.melissatantaquidgeonzobel.com/>