



**Asticou's Island Domain: Wabanaki Peoples at  
Mount Desert Island - 1500-2000: Acadia National  
Park Ethnographic Overview and Assessment -  
Volume 2**

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Maine has one of the longest and most unspoiled coastlines on the Atlantic. Glancing at this rugged and rocky coast stirs thoughts of the past and makes one wonder how people survived the geographic—and climatic—challenges of the place. But a more careful look reveals sandy coves and calm inlets where the first peoples of Maine made their homes seasonally since time immemorial. Here they survived by following nature's rhythms. Here the lives of countless generations of people began and ended. They were the ancestors of today's Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Maliseet and Micmac tribes. Collectively known as Wabanaki or "People of the Dawnland," they had many things in common: lifeways that fit into this unique environment, interconnected bloodlines, legends that were told at the campfire, and songs that were sung at ceremonies. Over the last 400 years, the social structure of Wabanaki peoples has undergone dramatic transformations. The coming of the European explorers, merchants and settlers brought wars and epidemics, which took heavy tolls among our peoples. The important part of our history is that we survived this assault and are alive today to carry on the bloodlines and traditions of our ancestors. This report is a valuable piece of work. It captures important segments of the history that have been hidden under so many layers of various stories. It will serve as a reminder of the lifeways of the Wabanaki people, which are so important to understand—about our deep connection to and religious convictions about the land, rivers and ocean of this region. Reading this study, future generations of people will learn to appreciate the type of history the Wabanaki people had, adapting to an environment of extremes—a habitat that was sometimes generous but often harsh. This historical-ethnographic overview of Acadia National Park spans almost 500 years and covers a wide coastal stretch between Penobscot and Gouldsboro Bays – and sometimes much beyond. Such breadth of coverage is necessary in order to take in the park's center piece on Mount Desert Island, plus Isle au Haut and Schoodic Peninsula, along with various land holding arrangements (including easements) on numerous offshore sea-islands in this area. The study explores the shifting but ongoing relationship between this habitat and Wabanaki peoples – a group of northeastern Algonquian speaking ethnic groups or tribal nations today distinguished as the Abenaki, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot.

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