



# Wabanaki Stories

2025-2026  
AUDIENCE  
GUIDE

## ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The land and waters known as Maine have been home to Wabanaki peoples for over 12,000 years. Historically, there were over 20 distinct groups of people, named for their relationship to the lands and waters that shaped their lifeways, that we now call tribes. In 2022, there are five Wabanaki tribes: Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki. This vibrant production of Indigenous stories and music spotlights six Wabanaki artists coming from several different nations and traditions. **Chris Newell (Passamaquoddy)** narrates, bringing audiences on a journey, **Tania Morey (Maliseet, Mi'kmaq)** sings of the Wolastoq; **Jennifer Pictou (Mi'kmaq)** regales with spirit stories; **Dwayne Tomah (Passamaquoddy)** shares stories showcasing his native language; **Ashton Altvater aka Undeniable the Native (Passamaquoddy)** delights with original rap and hip hop; **Jason Brown aka Firefly (Penobscot)** electrifies with ancient frequencies.

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## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

This production is conceived as an equitable partnership between both Portland Ovation and the Wabanaki performers. In respect of Wabanaki ancestral knowledge and those that pass it on, the creation and direction of this production is led by Wabanaki artists and supported by Portland Ovation in bringing it to the stage. The intent is by allowing the best of both sets of knowledge to partner together we co-generate a rich and transformational experience for Portland Ovation, the performers, and especially the audience. The goal is to create a production that is both entertaining and educational to both Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki audiences. Each performer, recognized by their communities for their knowledge, decides and self-directs their own performance. By allowing the differences between Wabanaki cultures to be present in the same stage performance, we hope to enlighten audiences about the nuances between the living Wabanaki peoples and communities of today.

### SPONSORED BY:

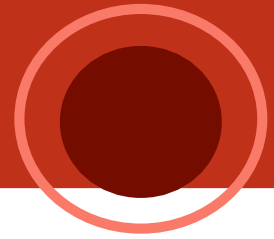


COFFEE BY DESIGN

### SUPPORTED BY:

MORTON-KELLY  
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# TALK ABOUT IT



## WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHILE YOU WATCH

Here are some questions to ponder as you watch the performance

- What does “Wabanki” roughly mean? where does the name come from?
- How has Wabanaki storytelling evolved over time?
- How does storytelling help maintain Wabanaki cultures and traditions?
- English is not the language these stories come from, and English versions are translations. Each storyteller navigates translation slightly differently. How do you think this impacts storytelling?
- Wabanaki storytellers often use tools and methods to keep the audience involved. What are some of those tools or methods?

## DIG DEEPER

Here are some questions to consider after you watch the performance

- Wabanaki stories are educational tools. Name a memorable character and what you learned by hearing a story about them.
- What did you learn about the histories of Wabanaki peoples?
- What did you learn about the Wabanaki peoples of today?
- What can you take with you from this experience and apply to your life?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Abbe Museum Educator Hub

<https://www.abbemuseum.org/educatorhub>

### Online Tribal Mukurtu Collection Site

[PassamaquoddyPeople.com](http://PassamaquoddyPeople.com)

### Passamaquoddy language resources and lessons

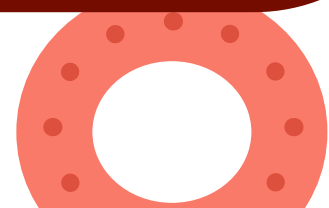
<https://passamaquoddypeople.com/collection/lewestuhtine>

### Wabanaki Collection – part of the Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Center UNB

<https://www.wabanakicollection.com/>

### Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Language Portal video material

<https://pmportal.org/videos>



# VOCABULARY

## WABANAKI

collective term for culturally related Indigenous peoples of the northeast roughly translating to “People of the Dawnland”

## PASSAMAQUODDY

Wabanaki nation in the territory of Skutik (now known as the St. Croix River) derived from the word Peskotomuhkati or “people who spear pollack”

## PENOBSCOT

Wabanaki nation located on their namesake Penobscot River derived from the term Penawapskewi which describes the “descending ledges” portion of the river near their present-day community in Indian Island

## MI'KMAQ

the easternmost and largest present-day Wabanaki nation comprised of seven traditional districts in what is now Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec, and parts of northern Maine. The name is likely derived from the Mi'kmaq term “nikmaq” meaning “my kin/friends”

## MALISEET

Wabanaki nation on their namesake river Wolastoq (present day St. John River). Maliseet peoples call themselves Wolastoqiyik or “people of the beautiful and bountiful river.”

## ABENAKI

the westernmost Wabanaki nation, traditionally composed of peoples stewarding lands from present-day western Maine into Quebec. “Abenaki” is a derivation of a term that roughly translates to “people of the rising sun”.

# ACTIVITIES

## WHOSE LAND DO YOU LIVE AND LEARN ON?

Historically there were more than five tribes or groups that identified as Wabanaki cultures. Use [Native-land.ca](http://Native-land.ca) to zoom in on your hometown and identify which Wabanaki cultural group on whose homelands your town now resides

Once you've identified on whose homelands you live, visit the Abbe Museum's People of the First Light Interactive Map to learn more about the geography, languages, and stories of Wabanaki cultural groups in your area.



Check out the  
People of the  
First Light  
Interactive Map

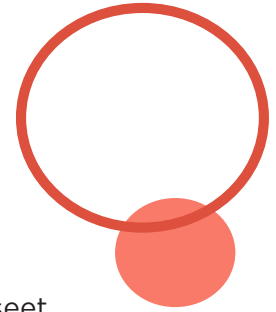
## COMMUNITY STORYTELLING

Stories are often passed between generations. Use this activity to collect and tell stories from and about your community.

- Identify an elder you'd like to interview. They might be a teacher, a family member, or a close friend.
- Plan your questions: Think about what you'd like to ask in your interview. Not sure where to start? Check out these lists of questions from Story Corps!
  - <https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/>
- Before your interview, make sure you're ready with your list of questions and something to take notes on.
- Interview time! Have a conversation with the elder you identified. Take notes on their answers to your questions so that you can refer to them later.
- Once your interview is complete, review your notes. What moments in your conversation made you laugh? What moments made you think?
- Choose a moment from your interview that resonated with you to share with others. Consider the best way to tell your story—perhaps your story would be best shared with pictures, with puppets, or just with your voice.

## BEING AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

An audience member is a part of a larger community – an audience – and you all work together to create your theater experience. Audience members play a special and important role in the performance. The performers are very aware of the audience while they perform. Sharing their hard work and joy with you is one of the best parts of being a performer. Each performance calls for different audience responses. Lively bands, musicians and dancers may desire audience members to clap and move to the beat. Other performers require silent focus on the stage and talking from the audience can be distracting. A theater is designed to magnify sound and even the smallest whispers can be heard throughout the auditorium. The storytellers in Wabanaki Stories highly encourage clapping and laughing at the parts of the performance that you enjoy.



## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Portland Ovations' programs are presented on Wabanaki land, home of the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations.

We encourage you to learn more and take action in support of Maine's Indigenous communities through the following organizations

### Abbe Museum

Maine's premiere museum dedicated to Indigenous history and culture. Their mission is to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit.

### Maine-Wabanaki Reach

A Native-led non-profit that supports the self-determination of Wabanaki people through education, truth-telling, restorative justice, and restorative practices in Wabanaki and Maine communities.

## ABOUT PORTLAND OVATIONS

Founded in 1931, produces dynamic performing arts events including classical music, jazz, opera, dance, theater, and Broadway. We believe that cultural enrichment should be high quality and accessible to all. Ovations collaborates with other nonprofit organizations, education systems, and the business sector to promote lifelong learning while celebrating the power and virtuosity of the performing arts. We bring the exhilaration of the performing arts into our communities with free events as part of Ovations Offstage, connecting artists and audiences. Join us at unexpected "art happenings," classroom workshops, masterclasses, community discussions, and pre-performance lectures to explore together the relevance and connection of the performing arts to our lives.