

Native American tribe in Maine buys back island taken 160 years ago

Level: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Match these indigenous groups and peoples with their countries.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Maasai | a. New Zealand |
| 2. Aramean | b. Finland, Sweden and Norway |
| 3. Sinhalese | c. United States |
| 4. Karen | d. Kenya and Tanzania |
| 5. Saami | e. Sri Lanka |
| 6. Inuit | f. Syria |
| 7. Sioux | g. Myanmar and Thailand |
| 8. Māori | h. Greenland, Canada and Alaska |

2 Key words

a. Find words in the article that match the definitions below. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. the edge of a sea, lake, or large river _____ (para 1)
2. someone who looks after a piece of land _____ (para 3)
3. people who go to live in a place where not many people live and start to make it into a community _____ (para 4)
4. something that you hope to do or achieve _____ (para 5)
5. something that you have to do morally _____ (para 7)
6. the action of killing of a lot of people _____ (para 10)
7. saying in a very firm way that you want something _____ (para 11)
8. holding a special meaning _____ (para 17)
9. illnesses that affect many people and are often caused by infections _____ (para 18)
10. people who are related to you who lived a long time ago _____ (para 20)

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b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. Our _____ is to provide free medical care for everyone who lives here.
2. The workers are _____ fewer hours and better pay.
3. The children explored the island's rocky _____.
4. My _____ came here from France in the 19th century.
5. It is your _____ as a parent to protect your children.

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Alice Hutton

4 June, 2021

- 1 The advert for White's Island said that, for \$449,000, you could buy 143 acres of forests with views of the shoreline of Big Lake in Maine, on the east coast of the United States.
- 2 "It's a unique property, full of history, with only two owners in the last 95 years," wrote the estate agent.
- 3 In fact, Kuwesuwi Monihq, or Pine Island, its original name, has really just had one "caretaker": the Passamaquoddy, a small tribe of 3,700 Native Americans who lived there for at least 10,000 years.
- 4 It's a spiritually important place for the tribe, filled with graves from tribe members who died of diseases brought there by white settlers. Until 2021, no tribe member had been on the island for 160 years.
- 5 "The land was stolen from us and it's been every chief's goal to return it," said Chief William Nicholas, who saw the advert on a shop noticeboard in July, 2020.
- 6 In March, with help from conservation charities, the tribe raised \$355,000, and finally bought the island back.
- 7 Donald Soctomah, the tribe's historic preservation officer, said the tribe believes "that nobody 'owns' land. Instead, we have a sacred duty to protect it. This is like finding a lost relative."
- 8 The return of Pine Island is the latest successful "land back" attempt by US indigenous groups. The groups have lost 1.5 billion acres since 1776, which resulted in poverty, violence and cultural apartheid.
- 9 In July, 2020, the Esselen tribe bought 1,200 acres in California's Big Sur for \$4.5m, also donated by conservationists.
- 10 In 2019, the Wiyot tribe got back the 280-acre Duluwat Island in California, when the city of Eureka returned it for free, 159 years after a massacre.
- 11 In July, 2020, protesters and tribal citizens blocked roads around the tourist destination of Mount Rushmore, in South Dakota, demanding the government give it back after it was taken from the Lakota in 1877.
- 12 In 1980, the supreme court offered the tribe a large amount of money to make up for losing the land, but they want their home, not cash.
- 13 Dr Mishuana Goeman, a professor in American Indian Studies at the University of California Los Angeles and member of New York's Tonawanda Band of Seneca tribe, said it was an example of "land back being about more than money".
- 14 "It's about having healthier relationships with the land for the good of humanity," she said.
- 15 This is why conservation charities are helping. First Light, a collective of ecological groups founded in Maine to return tribal lands, gave the Passamaquoddy money to buy back the island.
- 16 Peter Forbes, a First Light member, said: "If the land hadn't been stolen, they wouldn't need to buy it back."
- 17 For the Passamaquoddy, who lost members to Covid-19, reacquiring Pine Island during a pandemic is significant.
- 18 It was during the "Great Dying", when 90% died from European diseases between the 1500s and 1800s, that the island came to their rescue.
- 19 In an act of self-sacrifice, infected members quarantined on the neighbouring island of Muwinuwi Monihk.
- 20 Corey Hinton, a young Passamaquoddy lawyer, said: "It made me realize that my people have lived and died on that island since time began. When the pandemic is over, we will return to dance with our ancestors again."

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3 Find the information

a. Find information in the article to answer the questions in as much detail as possible.

1. Which three names is the island known by?
2. Where is it?
3. How large is it?
4. Who owns it now?
5. How much did they pay to buy back the island?
6. How did they get the money to buy back the island?
7. How long had the tribe lived on the island before?
8. Why is this island so culturally important to the tribe?

4 Expressions

a. Use the words to make expressions from the article that match the meanings below.

agent apartheid came cultural estate fact for
good humanity in of rescue the their to

1. someone whose job it is to sell houses, property or land _____
(2 words, para 2)
2. used for saying what is really true, when this is surprising or different from what people think
_____ (2 words, para 3)
3. a situation in which different groups in a place live almost completely separate lives, often with one group having benefits that other groups do not have _____
(2 words, para 8)
4. in a way that benefits everyone _____ (5 words, para 14)
5. helped them out in a difficult situation _____ (4 words, para 18)

b. Use the expressions to complete these sentences about the article.

1. People call it Pine Island, but _____, its Passamaquoddy name is Kuwesuwi Monihq.
2. As the Passamaquoddy tribe didn't have the money to buy back the island, a group of charities _____.

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3. An _____ sold the island back to the tribe.
4. _____ has led to poverty and violence in some Native American groups.
5. We must look after the Earth _____.

5 Discussion

a. Find the Island on a map.

- What can you see nearby?

b. Look for photos or videos of the island landscape.

- Describe what you see.
- How do you think the tribe feels about the return to the island?
- If you could, what would you like to ask them?

c. Discuss this quote from the article.

“Nobody ‘owns’ land. Instead, we have a sacred duty to protect it.”

- Do you agree with it?
- What would it mean for your life?

6 In your own words

a. How many Native American tribes are there in the United States? Circle the correct answer:

5 52 256 562

b. Choose one tribe and research it. Hold a three-minute presentation about the tribe. Use photos or videos from the internet to add to your presentation if possible.