

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

Level: Advanced

### 1 Warmer

a. Match these indigenous groups 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. Write the correct word from the wordpool next to the definitions below. Then find and highlight the words in the article to read them in context.

atrocities      bid      catalyst      census      colonialist      compensation  
devastating      grant      rugged      self-sacrifice      territory      treaty

1. not smooth nor flat \_\_\_\_\_
2. causing a lot of harm or damage \_\_\_\_\_
3. allow someone to have or do what they want \_\_\_\_\_
4. someone who supports a situation in which one country rules another \_\_\_\_\_
5. an official written negotiated agreement between two or more countries or peoples  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. an occasion on which government officials count the people who live in a country and record other information about them \_\_\_\_\_
7. land (originally) belonging to or occupied by a certain group or tribe \_\_\_\_\_
8. something that causes something to happen or change \_\_\_\_\_
9. cruel and violent acts \_\_\_\_\_

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10. money that someone receives because something bad has happened to them  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. an offer to give a particular amount of money for something \_\_\_\_\_
12. the behaviour of someone who chooses not to have or to do something that they want in order to help other people \_\_\_\_\_

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

1. The new development will act as a \_\_\_\_\_ for growth in business and tourism.
2. The highest \_\_\_\_\_ was just under three million dollars, which was more than the seller had hoped for.
3. She was awarded £5,000 in \_\_\_\_\_ for unfair dismissal.
4. Gambling can have a \_\_\_\_\_ effect on families.
5. The brutal destruction of an entire village was one of the worst \_\_\_\_\_ of the war.
6. If permission is \_\_\_\_\_, they'll start building soon.

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***The Passamaquoddy's purchase of Pine Island for \$355,000 is the latest in a series of successful 'land back' campaigns for indigenous people in the US***

**Alice Hutton**

**4 June, 2021**

- 1 The advert painted an idyllic picture of White's Island.
- 2 For \$449,000, you could buy 143 acres of forests with sweeping views of the rugged shoreline of Big Lake in Maine, on the east coast of the United States. "It's a unique property, steeped in history, with only two owners in the last 95 years," wrote the estate agent from privateislandsonline.com.
- 3 In fact, Kuwesuwi Monihq, or Pine Island, is its original name, and it technically has just one true "caretaker": the Passamaquoddy, a small tribe of 3,700 Native Americans who had lived there for at least 10,000 years.
- 4 It's a spiritually important place for the tribe, filled with graves from devastating smallpox, cholera and measles outbreaks caused by white settlers.
- 5 In 1794, it was officially granted to the tribe by Massachusetts for their service during the revolutionary war. But after 1820, when Maine became its own state, colonialists changed its title, voiding the treaty. In the 1851 census, there were 20 Passamaquoddy living there; in 1861, there were none.
- 6 By 2021, they had not only lost all but 130,000 acres of their original three million. They hadn't set foot on Pine Island in 160 years.
- 7 "The land was stolen from us and it's been every chief's goal ever since to return it," said Chief William Nicholas, 51, leader of the tribe's Indian township reservation for the last 11 years, who spotted the advert on a shop noticeboard on 4 July, 2020.
- 8 In March, with a grant from conservation charities, the tribe raised \$355,000, and finally bought the island back.
- 9 Donald Soctomah, the tribe's historic preservation officer, added: "Our concept of land ownership is that nobody 'owns' land. Instead, we have a sacred duty to protect it. This is like finding a lost relative."
- 10 The reclaiming of Pine Island is the latest successful "land back" attempt by US indigenous groups following the loss of 1.5bn acres since 1776, resulting in poverty, violence and cultural apartheid.
- 11 In July, 2020, the formerly landless Esselen tribe purchased 1,200 acres in California's Big Sur for \$4.5m, also donated by conservationists, 250 years after being forced into Christian missions.
- 12 In 2019, the Wiyot tribe won back the 280-acre Duluwat Island in California, when the city of Eureka returned it for free, 159 years after a massacre.
- 13 There's also a growing movement by many public and private institutions to be more transparent, with Harvard University, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Oscars announcing "land acknowledgements". The Native Land app will even show you what territory your house is built on.
- 14 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 acknowledgements are "a good start" but that a big catalyst has been the pandemic and murder of George Floyd.
- 15 "It's like people suddenly woke up to centuries of atrocities against indigenous and black communities and are more open to dialogue," she said.
- 16 In July, 2020, amid global marches on racial injustice, protesters and tribal citizens blocked roads around the tourist destination of Mount Rushmore, in South Dakota, demanding the government hand it back after it was taken from the Lakota in 1877, despite a treaty, because gold was discovered.
- 17 In 1980, the supreme court granted the tribe compensation valued at \$1bn in 2011, but they want their home, not cash.

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- 18 Dr Goeman said it was an example of “land back being about more than justice for the indigenous and money”.
- 19 “It’s about having healthier relationships with the land for the good of humanity,” she said.
- 20 Increasingly, this is why conservation charities with deep pockets are stepping in.
- 21 The Passamaquoddy bid was funded by First Light; a collective of ecological groups founded in Maine to return tribal lands.
- 22 Peter Forbes, a First Light member, said: “If the land hadn’t been stolen, they wouldn’t need to buy it back in the first place.”
- 23 For the Passamaquoddy, who lost members to Covid-19, reacquiring Pine Island during a pandemic is significant.
- 24 It was during the “Great Dying”, when 90% died from European diseases between the 1500s and 1800s, that the island came to their rescue.
- 25 In an act of self-sacrifice, infected members quarantined on the neighbouring island of Muwinuwi Monihk, which was renamed “Gordon’s Island” by the colonialists who took it but which was returned by a paper company in 2003.
- 26 Corey Hinton, a young Passamaquoddy lawyer, told the *Guardian*: “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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First published in *The Guardian*, 04/06/2021

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### 3 Comprehension

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 this part of their ancestral land?
6. How did they raise the money to purchase the island?
7. How long had the tribe lived on the island before they were evicted?
8. What makes this island especially culturally important to the tribe?

### 4 Expressions

a. Find expressions in the article that match the meanings below.

1. describe something in a way that makes it sound like paradise  
\_\_\_\_\_ (4 words, para 1)
2. non-indigenous people who go to live in a place and make it their own  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 words, para 4)
3. make a written agreement no longer legal or effective  
\_\_\_\_\_ (3 words, para 5)
4. go somewhere \_\_\_\_\_ (3 words, para 6)
5. an area of land in the US where Native Americans live in a separate community  
\_\_\_\_\_ (3 words, para 7)
6. a situation in which different groups in society live almost completely separate lives, often with one group enjoying benefits that other groups cannot enjoy  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 words, para 10)
7. willing to talk about a difficult subject \_\_\_\_\_  
(3 words, para 15)
8. in a way that benefits everyone \_\_\_\_\_  
(5 words, para 19)
9. having a lot of money \_\_\_\_\_ (2 words, para 20)
10. become involved in a discussion or argument, especially in order to make it stop  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2 words, para 20)

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- b. Use the expressions to talk about the article.
- c. Now use each one in a new and unrelated sentence of your own.

### 5 Discussion

a. Find the Island on a map.

- Is it where you understood it to be?
- What is nearby?

b. Go online and look for photos and videos of the island.

- Is it how you expected it to be?
- Describe what you see.

c. Discuss this quote from the article and say how it would affect your life if you lived by this motto:

“Our concept of land ownership is that nobody ‘owns’ land. Instead, we have a sacred duty to protect it.”

d. What do you understand by the expression:

“It’s about having healthier relationships with the land for the good of humanity”?

- Do you think humanity needs a ‘healthier relationship with the land’? Why / Why not?

### 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 and research it so that you can hold an interesting and informative five-minute presentation.

### 7 Extra reading and extension

a. Find out about laws and regulations regarding the indigenous and first peoples’ rights in your country. Answer the questions:

- What are their basic rights?
- Do you think these rights are being respected?
- What other rights should they have?

b. Compare the local regulations to some international treaties, for example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or The American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- Is your country a signatory member of this declaration?
- How is it different than the local regulations?
- Why is it important to have international declarations such as these?