

The EcoIndian:
Myths and Realities in the Narragansett Indian Tribe
and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Megan Waples

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Arts Degree
Center for Environmental Studies

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all of those who have helped me to complete this thesis, especially: Shep Krech for inspiration and insight; Caroline Karp for all of her help and continuous support; Nancy Jacobs for her excellent comments and ideas; Nora Olsen for, well, everything; my family, also for everything; my house; the farm; and most of all Jessica Patterson, for always knowing.

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the image of American Indians as the original environmentalists and ecological stewards has become increasingly popular. This thesis examines the role of the EcoIndian image in shaping current tribal resource use in the Narragansett and Mashantucket Pequot Indian nations? This question covers two areas. The first is the congruency between the Indians' behavior and images of themselves; the second, the role it plays in the relationships with non-Indian society. The paper finds that the image of the EcoIndian has deep historical roots and has many meanings in current society both in defining American culture and civilization and in serving as commentary on American interactions with nature. Both the Narragansett and Pequot Tribes express a commitment and connection to the environment that is congruent with the EcoIndian image in various official statements on the environment and environmental protection. Similar ideas are also expressed in the Narragansett Tribe's environmental regulations and assessments.

However, for both Tribes, their actions only partially match their words. The Narragansetts have worked hard to establish many of their own environmental management programs on their lands, and there are very few environmental problems on the reservation. However, the Tribe has proposed to build a large scale gaming facility and has resisted formal environmental review. The Mashantucket Pequots have invested significant financial resources in environmental protection, but have also engaged in high intensity, high impact development. They have also strongly resisted outside regulation and review of their developments.

These issues of environmental regulation and protection are a part of a larger struggle over sovereignty and power; the EcoIndian image has been used as a tool by both sides to justify asserting control and jurisdiction. These uses are examined in a case study on the proposed Narragansett gambling facility. For those opposed to the facility, the EcoIndian has encouraged the idea that Indians should be more environmentally aware in their land use and development patterns, and thus not engage in developments such as casinos. For these people, the image has also been used to show that the Narragansetts are not "real Indians" and thus should not have the rights of a sovereign. On the other hand, the EcoIndian image has also been used by the Narragansetts to show that they are the people responsible for the land, and that they should have the right to govern it as they please. Thus both the use of the image and the environment have become politicized as part of the struggle over sovereignty and environmental regulation on Narragansett and Mashantucket Pequot lands.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ASSC - Alliance to Save South County
- EA - Environmental Assessment
- EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
- EPA - Environmental Protection Agency
- IGRA - National Indian Gaming Regulatory Act
- LUP - Land Use Plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement Area, Rhode Island Depart of Planning
- NDNR - Narragansett Indian Tribe Department of Natural Resources
- NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act
- NIGC - National Indian Gaming Commission
- TAS - Treatment in the same Manner as a State (under EPA)
- ZO - Narragansett Tribe of Indians Zoning Ordinance

INTRODUCTION

In a proclamation declaring November 1995 as National American Indian Heritage Month, President William Clinton remarked:

Living in harmony with nature instead of seeking domination, American Indians have shown us how to be responsible for our environment, to treasure the beauty and resources of the land and water for which we are stewards, and to preserve them for the generations who will come after us.¹

In this statement, President Clinton presented an image of American Indians that has become increasingly popular: the EcoIndian.² The image of the EcoIndian is that of the Indian in nature, the Indian as ecological steward and original environmentalist. This image has come to dominate American's views of Native Americans. It can be found in the statements of other top policy makers. Carol Browner, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, said in her statement to the National Congress of American Indians that it was, "a particular pleasure for me to have the opportunity to meet with representatives of cultures that have long recognized the interconnectedness of human beings and the natural world – the air, the water and the land."³ It can also be found in the classrooms of America. A recent article in the local paper of Allentown, Pennsylvania described a local ninth-grade class project: an "ecodrama" about Native Americans. The article states, "Explaining the tie-in with ecology, [the teacher] said American Indians were stewards of the environment and respected the land. During the skit, students blessed the deer after killing it."⁴ The idea of American Indians as stewards of the earth is widely accepted by the American public.

Yet this image and its uses are somewhat paradoxical. While this image is very popular, in many cases it is directly contradicted by the actions of Indian societies today. As Indian societies struggle with some of the highest levels of poverty of any ethnic group in the United States, they have turned to forms of economic development such as

¹ "THE WHITE HOUSE: National American Indian Heritage Month, 1995, by the Pres. Of the USA, a proclamation," 6 November 1995, M2 Presswire, online, Nexis/Lexis, 16 December 1996

² This is a shortened version of Shepard Krech's term, the Ecological Indian

³ "Addresses the National Congress of American Indians Winter Convention; Washington D.C. Speaker: Carol Browner, EPA Administrator," 26 Feb. 1996, Federal Document Clearing House, Inc. Political Transcripts, online, Nexis/Lexis, 16 December 1996

⁴ Susan Snyder, "Ecodrama Brings Nature Studies to Life: Dieruff High Students Learn by Acting Out Lessons. World's a Stage," The Morning Call (Allentown) 22 May 1996, second ed.: B7, online, Nexis/Lexis, 16 December 1996

strip mines, waste dumps, logging, and large land developments such as casinos and luxury resorts. These developments create significant environmental issues that are certainly not consistent with the EcoIndian image. However, these realities are often ignored when Americans talk about Indians and their interactions with the Earth.

This contradiction is part of larger paradox surrounding the image and its use. The image is based on perceptions of the historical lifestyles of American Indians. Yet, it is the one of the most popular current images of American Indians. Thus, it is an image based on ideas about the past, applied today. This paradox is perhaps most apparent in another statement in President Clinton's proclamation: "American Indians have a great reverence for the earth and its bounty, and they generously shared their knowledge and their food with the early European settlers in our country." With a quick flip in verb tense, he switches between the Indians of the present and those of 500 years ago in the space of a few words.

This is not the President's confusion alone. It is part of a larger problem of transforming perceptions of history into a popular modern image; one so popular that it dominates many Americans' understandings of Indians. This juxtaposition of times and people has been a source of confusion in ideas about Indians for many years. Donald Kaufmann describes this problem in his article, *The Indian as Media Hand-Me-Down*:

American history had played an untimely trick on the Indian, making him the one racial minority with a deprived present...the American Indian became more and more the ward of the government and the guardian of the national urge to dream, forever, about the Wild West. Americans - from the movie-goer to the anthropologist - had remained fixed on the image of the Indian as the semi-nomadic hunter, occasionally squatting in a tepee, or making pottery, picking berries before taking off, pronto, alternating between canoe and horse, wearing feathers, ribbons, beads and of course giving off the masterful grunt of a doomed race.⁵

This situation creates a gap in people's awareness of Indians and Indian life in the present. It ignores the present reality of Indians, and obscures an understanding of how Indians today are interacting with their environment. This is problematic, as Kaufmann suggests, not only in the literature of pop-culture, but also in scholarly debate. While many scholars have debated the historical accuracy and implications of this image, an

understanding of what it means and the role it plays in current Indian affairs is missing. This question is particularly relevant and important considering the large number of environmental issues arising in Indian country.

That gap inspires the central question of this paper: what is the role of the EcoIndian image in shaping current tribal resource use in the Narragansett and Mashantucket Pequot Indian nations? This question covers two areas: first, the congruency between the Indians' behavior and images of themselves; and second, the role it plays in the relationships with non-Indian society. The exploration of this question is broken down into three parts. The first is an examination of the origins and meanings of the EcoIndian image. The second is a look at Narragansett and Pequot resource use and management, and how they meet or do not meet the expectations of the EcoIndian image. The final step is an exploration of the relationship between the image and the Tribes' resource use and management. The paper finds that the image of the EcoIndian has deep historical roots and has many meanings in current society both in defining American culture and civilization and in serving as commentary on American interactions with nature. While both the Narragansett and Pequot tribes express a commitment and connection to the environment that is congruent with the EcoIndian image, their actions only partially fulfill the expectations associated with it. Both the use of the image and the environment have become politicized as part of the struggle over sovereignty and environmental regulation on Narragansett and Mashantucket Pequot lands.

⁵ Donald L. Kaufman, "The Indian as Media Hand-me-Down," The Colorado Quarterly 23 (1975) 489

THE IMAGE

HISTORY

Ideas Behind Images

There have been many studies done on how non-Indians have portrayed Indians, and each author utilizes a different method of analysis. Roy Harvey Pearce, in his study on Savagism, delineates his use of the concepts Idea, Symbol, and Image. In his book, the Idea is Savagery, the Symbol is the Indian, and the Images are the descriptions of Indians. The present study seeks a much wider perspective; the search for the roots of the EcoIndian goes further back into time than Pearce's study and comes up to the present. Pearce's strict definitions will not be followed here, but they are useful tools, as the history of the EcoIndian involves several symbols and countless images. However, behind all of these there is a common idea: that of the natural, non-European man. From the time of first contact in 1492, American Indians have been fundamentally defined in the European mindset as something that Europeans were not. As Robert Berkhofer points out, Europeans "comprehended [the] new world in terms of their familiar conceptual categories and values."⁶ Thus, the Indians were typically described in terms of how they were different from Europeans, usually in terms of what they lacked. The primary difference, of course, was that Indians lacked civilization as defined by Europeans; they instead were considered as being part of nature. In fact, the very word used to describe them, savage, comes from the Latin *silvaticus*, meaning "forest inhabitant, man of the woods."⁷ There were four main differences that made the Indians part of the natural world, rather than part of the civilized, human world. Europeans repeatedly noted that Indians lived off the land as hunter/gatherers, with only swidden agriculture; that they practiced pagan, animistic religions; their apparent lack of central government or any government at all; and possibly most important, an apparent lack of any concept of property. European interpretations of the differences between Europeans and American Indians reflected European and Euro-American ideas about themselves,

⁶ Robert F. Berkhofer, "White Conceptions of Indians," History of Indian-White Relations (Washington DC : Smithsonian Institute, 1988) 522

⁷ Berkhofer 524

their societies, and Nature. Viewing the Indian as something fundamentally different from their own society, Europeans and Euro-Americans through time have created images that commented on the merit of their society. As Berkhofer notes:

Since White views of Indians are inextricably bound up with the evaluation of their own society and culture, then ambivalence of Europeans and Americans over the worth of their own customs and civilizations would show up in their appraisal of Indian life.⁸

Thus images both positive and negative were created, depending on the writers outlook on European life, and these images changed as their own society changed. Different schools of thought about civilization, nature, and man gave rise to different impressions and images of Indian life, and these images served as commentaries on the virtues and vices of civilized life. They are examined here as in relation to the search for Eden, the tradition of Savagery, the growth of conservation, and the current environmental movement.

The Search for Eden

They go naked, they know neither weights nor measures, nor that source of all misfortunes, money; living in a golden age, without laws, without lying judges, without books, satisfied with their life and in no wise solicitous for the future.

Such were the earliest depictions of Indian life. Although the letters from Columbus and Vespucci were not distributed widely in Europe, Peter Martyr used their descriptions to write about the New World for the European audience, often creating such idyllic images. Of Cuba he writes, "It is indeed a golden age, neither ditches, nor hedges, nor walls to enclose their domains; they live in gardens open to all..."⁹ Many writers used this imagery: in Of the Caniballes Montaigne commented that Indian societies

doth not only exceed all the pictures wherewith licentious poesie hath proudly embellished the golden age...but also the conception and desire of Philosophy. Lycurgus and Plato could not imagine a genuitie so pure and simple.¹⁰

⁸ Berkhofer 527

⁹ Martyr in Howard Mumford Jones, O Strange New World - American Culture: The Formative Years (London: Chalton and Windus 1965) 17

¹⁰ Montaigne in Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism (New York: Columbia University Press 1928) 128

Such references to the golden age were found quite frequently in the earliest descriptions of American Indians. Although not all descriptions used this imagery as openly as the above passages, many relied upon golden age imagery to convey ideas about American Indians. This tendency was part of a larger trend in Europe at that time. The 15th century saw a return to literature about the Golden Age and other Utopias. Europeans revived and reinvented ideas of the Golden Age (from Ovid and Hesiod), Paradise, Eden, the Islands of the Blessed. Europeans dreamed of lands where there was no suffering, no greed, no corruption. A land where the people were innocent and pure. The search for Eden was fictional for many, but real for others. The idea of a land to the East or the West where the Earthly Paradise could be found took hold in the European mind. It provided relief from the war, corruption, and uncertainty of 15th century European life.¹¹

While the explorations of Columbus and those who followed were perhaps motivated by the more worldly desires of fame and fortune, to many a European mind it seemed they had stumbled upon such an Eden. And as one author comments, "The identification of the Caribbean islands with the Earthly Paradise naturally lent prestige to their inhabitants."¹² In the European view, the Indians of the Caribbean isles lived in and were part of the earthly paradise; they were naked in their innocence and natural goodness, they lived off the bounty of nature, they had no property and thus no greed or corruption. They were, according to Columbus, the natural inhabitants of the Islands of the Blessed. To the Europeans, Indians were natural people in a Nature that was bountiful and kind.

As the English explored America, they gave their own variations on the theme. The expedition of Amadas and Barlow to North Carolina "found the people most gentle, loving, and faithful, void of all guile and treason, and such as live after the manner of

¹¹ on the use of classical imagery see Fairchild; Richard Grove, Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860 (New York: Cambridge University Press 1995); Jones; and Shepard Krech III, The Ecological Indian, forthcoming

¹² Fairchild 6

the golden age."¹³ However, by this time the Spaniards had been in the tropical areas long enough to destroy most of the native populations and the temperate latitudes, with their four seasons, simply did not lend themselves as easily to visions of paradise. In addition, Europe was entering the Enlightenment and Europeans becoming concerned with political reform and philosophy. And so the American Indian would move from the Earthly Paradise to the state of nature, and become the Noble Savage.

Savagery

The earliest Edenic accounts described above were distinct from later imagery in their truly paradisaical feel -- their sense of nature as a simple and beautiful escape from the gloom, greed, and corruption of civilized Europe. However, this imagery laid the foundation for Savagery by placing the American Indian firmly in the natural realm. As Europe and European America began to enter the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, ideas of nature began to change. The philosophers and *philosophes* of the 17th and 18th centuries used the concepts of Reason, Nature, and Progress to explore the human condition and the origins of civilization, government, and property. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy comments that for the writers of the Enlightenment era, Nature was, "in part a hypostatized conception of the beautiful and the good... a set of ethical and aesthetic goals or standards."¹⁴ While not all writers of the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment era represented nature as good, it was certainly thought of not just as the physical surroundings but as a set of conditions and standards different from those governing civilization. Nature represented that which was possibly before and certainly separate from civilization. The idea of the separation of civilization and nature, and the different laws governing them, stemmed back to Roman times and the Justinian code. Writers of the 17th and 18th centuries struggled with these ancient ideas in order to understand and explain property, government, and civilization in ways that challenged and often rejected the Christian world view. In doing this, philosophers often played with the idea of the state of nature, a set of conditions antecedent to the creation of property and government.

¹³ Hakluyt in Jones 19

¹⁴ "Enlightenment," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Paul Edwards, Editor in Chief. The Macmillan Company and The Free Press. New York. v2 p520

The state of nature was a stage of society before civilization, whether good or bad. In discussing the state of nature and the subsequent development of civilization, the philosophers often used the American Indian as an example of life in the state of nature.

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau were three of the most influential writers on the subject of the state of nature and the creation of civilization over the course of two centuries. All three of these philosophers used the American Indian as an example of life in the state of nature, and all three agreed that the lack of real property was the defining feature of this life. However, they varied widely in their opinions of the virtues of civilization and nature. For Hobbes, the state of nature was inherently unpleasant; without man-made law, life was “nasty, poor, brutish and short;” the creation of property led to order and security. For Locke, the state of nature was fairly ambiguous. The lack of property and man-made laws meant greater liberty and equality -- money and property led to a tacit acceptance of inequality, and thus perhaps corruption and other vices as well. However, life in the state of nature was also inherently wasteful, as lands were left uncultivated and men wasted their labor. Thus the greatest Indian leader, in Locke’s view, was a lesser man than the simplest day laborer in England. For Rousseau, who was more associated with the Romantic movement, the accumulation of property led to ruin; primitive communities, in which most savages lived, provided the ideal situation of liberty and equality. For these three philosophers, the American Indians were an example of life in the state of nature; their evaluation of the quality of this life was inextricably tied to their ideas about the values of civilization and nature. Clearly, these evaluations differed greatly: for Hobbes, the savage Indians showed the greatness of civilization; for Rousseau, the life of the Indian showed that civilization represented the downfall of man.

These ideas and differing valuations also showed up not only in philosophical tracts and treatises but also in the more popular writings about and depictions of Indians during the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries. Authors often described Indians as living without property or law in a state of nature. Robert Cushman observed in 1622 that Indians, "do but run over the grass, as do also the foxes and wild beasts."¹⁵ This observation was supported by many others at the time and for years to come. Reverend

Samuel Purchas wrote in 1625 that Indians were “more wild then that unmanned wild Countrey, which they range rather than inhabite.”¹⁶ John Winthrop noted that, “The savage people rule over many lands without title or property; for they inclose no ground, neither have they cattell to maintayne it, but remove their dwellings as they have occasion.”¹⁷ Robert Beverly wrote in 1705 that the natives of Virginia were, “happy, I think, in their simple State of nature, and in their enjoyment of Plenty, without the Curse of Labor.”¹⁸ Seventy years later Adair wrote that Indians lived by the “plain and honest law of nature.”¹⁹ For each of these writers, the American Indians were savages living in the state of nature. Living in this state was seen not only as being good or bad in itself, but also as giving rise to good or bad characteristics and qualities in the people themselves. Thus there were images of the people themselves, both good and bad, which reflected writer’s attitudes towards civilization and nature. While the Ignoble Savage served to glorify civilization, the Noble Savage glorified nature. Savage imagery contrasted the values of nature with the values of civilization.²⁰

The Ignoble Savage, in the words of a great many colonists and visitors, lived more like a wild beast than a man. He had no manners, was rude and raw, stalked his prey like a wild predator, ate the foods of the forest with no implements or manners, and was violent, cruel, and ignorant. In Ignoble Savagery, nature is cruel, crude, raw and unmannerly; civilization is cultured, safe, refined and pleasant.

Hoxie Neale Fairchild, in his study of Noble Savage imagery, describes a Noble Savage as, “any free and wild being who draws directly from nature virtues which raise doubts as to the value of civilization.”²¹ Noble Savages were free of the government, laws, and properties that so restricted the civilized person. They were wild, a part of that untamed Nature that so characterized America, and were virtuous because of this association with Nature. The Noble Savage represented the simple goodness, strength

¹⁵ Cushman in Jones 189

¹⁶ Purchas in Roy Harvey Pearce, Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1988) 7

¹⁷ Winthrop in Jones 191

¹⁸ Beverly in Pearce 43

¹⁹ Adair in Pearce 47

²⁰ See Berkhofer, Pearce, Jones and Krech for more discussions on this point

²¹ Fairchild 2

and valor of Nature and of human nature before the corruption of modern society had taken hold.

Many virtues were ascribed to the Noble Savage. The enlightened Noble Savage had an acute sense of justice and equity; he was also courageous, honorable, and loyal. Of the many virtues that Noble Savages possess, Cadwallader Colden describes a few in 1727:

The *Five Nations* are a poor Barbarous People, under the *darkest Ignorance*, and yet a *bright and noble Genius* shines thro' these *black Clouds*. None of the greatest *Roman Hero's* have discovered a greater Love to their Country, or a greater Contempt of Death than these *Barbarians*, have done, when Life and Liberty came in Competition...

In addition, he wrote that the Five Nations were republics which demonstrated "the most *Ancient and Original Condition of almost every Nation*."²² The more romantic descriptions of the Noble Savage depict him as having strong emotions; while he may fly into a furious rage when provoked, he is also passionately loving and kind, as well as generous and compassionate. James Adair wrote in 1775:

their whole constitution breathes nothing but liberty; and when there is that equality of familiarity in society, as prevails in every Indian nation...there glows such a cheerfulness and warmth of courage in each of their breasts, as cannot be described.²³

All of these qualities were seen to be drawn from Nature. In Noble Savage imagery, civilization is greedy, corrupt, and degrades mankind; Nature is pure, simple, innocent, and brings out man's natural goodness.

Savages were thus considered to be a part of nature, and the images of Savagery reflected the European and Euro-American ideas and attitudes about nature and civilization, and exposed their disparities. What is interesting about the Savage imagery is that Noble and Ignoble images were defined by the same things. In either case, it was the Indians' association with Nature that made them virtuous or base, or both for some people. The fact that Indians lived off of nature through hunting and gathering made them innocent and clean children of nature one moment, and wild beasts the next. Their lack of government made them naturally honest and just for some but disorderly and

²² Cadwallader in Jones 242

mutinous to others. The same qualities were noble or ignoble depending on the author's view of nature and society, and also perhaps on their relation to Indians and Nature. And for many authors, some aspects of living in Nature were good, and some were bad; the Indians were not described as purely Noble and good or as purely Ignoble and bad, but had a mixture of the two. For example, in 1609, one author wrote that the Indians of Virginia are;

a wild and savage people, that live and lie up and downe in troupes like heards of Deere in a Forrest: they have no law but nature, their apparell skinnes of beasts, but most goe naked: the better sort have houses, but poore ones, they have no Arts nor Science, yet they live under superior command such as it is, they are generally very loving and gentle.²⁴

Reports that saw both good and bad in the qualities of Indians and their lifestyles continued through time. In 1828 Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language defined "savage" as:

A human being in his native state of rudeness, one who is untaught, uncivilized or without cultivation of mind or manners. The savages of America, when uncorrupted by the vices of civilized men, are remarkable for their hospitality to strangers, and for their truth, fidelity, and gratitude to their friends, but implacably cruel and revengeful toward their enemies...²⁵

Another, classic example of this mixture is the work of James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper wrote novels about life in America that were extremely popular with the American public. In many of his novels, there are Indian characters of two sorts. The majority of the Indians in his books are the ignoble savages; they are bloodthirsty and cruel. However, there are a few Indian characters that are noble savages, representing the virtues and goodness that can be gained from living in nature. Thus in his novels, Cooper creates a dichotomy of the good and bad aspects of life in the state of nature. This dichotomy is significant because both portrayals are related to ideas about nature and life in the state of nature.

In all of these instances, the authors recognize both positive and negative aspects in Indian life, and struggle to discover whether the good outweighs the bad. This

²³ Adair in Pearce 47

²⁴ Richard Johnson in Pearce 12

struggle was a part of the larger question of the worth of civilized life. As Pearce points out, for American writers of the late 18th century, “What mattered was not the intrinsic character of the New England Indians, but rather the meaning that character might have for the whole of New England life.”²⁶ During this period, the definitions and understanding of Indians as natural became an important part of American and European understandings of themselves as civilized. The images of savages were not only used explicitly as commentary, but because a part of the definition of civilized by showing what it was not. For better or for worse, American Indians showed Europeans and Americans what they were not. The differing evaluations told them whether they, “in becoming civilized had gained much more than they had lost,”²⁷ or had lost more than they gained.

A writer’s perspective on this question may have been related to their degree of actual contact with Indians. It is interesting to note that Noble Savage imagery began in Europe; it slowly moved to America, but once there, remained focused in the East for some time. It seems that Nature and Indians became noble only once they had been sufficiently tamed to not create a threat for whites.

The Growth of Conservation

Depictions of Native Americans changed markedly in the latter half of the 19th century. In earlier Noble Savage imagery, Indians were part of nature and provided values that questioned the values of civilization; the Noble Savage imagery from the 1860s up through the 1960s continued to contrast the values of nature and civilization, but emphasized the Indians’ interactions with nature and aboriginal resource use. By this time, aboriginal Indians had died off, and traditional Indian lifestyles had changed greatly. Anthropologists focused on recording the last memories of the old ways, and other Americans began to reinvent the Indians of the pre-contact era. Writers began to revere what they considered the Indians’ knowledge of the natural world, their clever and frugal use of natural resources, and their light impact on the land. Indians, or rather,

²⁵ Webster in Pearce, before title page

²⁶ Pearce 26

²⁷ Pearce 85

Euro-Americans' ideas of Indians, were used as an example against which to compare what one author termed "our bungling use of Nature."²⁸

This trend was a part of a growing interest in nature and concern about its fate. This level of interest and concern had two distinct origins: the Enlightenment era, which encouraged scientific analysis and study of nature and its order; and the Romantic movement, which revered nature as a source of good and purity that was necessary to offset the evils of civilization. Both of these movements toward conservation had their bases in the early 19th century. Writers such as Thoreau and Emerson began to expound on the virtues of nature, and many scholars began the pursuit of nature study. However, it was after the civil war that these concerns reached new heights. As the Industrial Revolution began, Americans became concerned about the increased pollution and destruction of natural resources. Some were concerned that the wanton destruction of forests and other resources would lead to their destruction and leave America in a state of resource scarcity. Others felt that America needed its wild places to restore peoples' spirit and virtue. All of them agreed that the unsullied beauty of the American wilderness needed protecting. These concerns led a variety of actions to protect natural resources, such as the creation of the Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture (later to become the Forest Service) and Forest Preserves. In addition, in 1872 Yellowstone became the world's first National Park, dedicated to preserving its scenic wonder; Yosemite followed some years later. The beginning of the twentieth century saw a split between those who thought resources should be used wisely and those who thought they should be preserved; either way, there was continued concern about protecting them from careless destruction. More National Parks and Forests were created, and the American public became more and more interested in visiting them. Railroads and the growing availability of family cars encouraged outings into nature. Country outings became a favorite pastime, and increasing numbers of Americans moved out of cities, which were considered crowded and dirty.²⁹ Interest in nature and its benefits - scientific, aesthetic,

²⁸ Fairchild 17

²⁹ For more about Americans' return to Nature, see Peter J. Schmitt, Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1969)

and moral - continued to grow in the early 20th century. Sporting clubs and conservation associations proliferated as did parks and suburbs.³⁰

In addition to an activist concern about the protection of natural resource, there was a growing artistic appreciation of nature. During the latter part of the 19th century, painters and writers glorified nature in their works. John Muir's writings about the "cathedral of nature" were matched by the magnificent landscapes paintings of the Hudson Valley school and later painters and artists. Perhaps because it was now seen as disappearing rapidly with the closing of the frontier in 1890 and the growth of industrialism, Americans placed nature in high esteem. They sought an example of how to use resources efficiently without destroying the natural world. The American Indian, already so closely associated with nature in the American mindset, was given that role.

John Muir wrote that "Indians walked softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than the birds and squirrels."³¹ While Muir looked to Indians as people who essentially had no impact on their environment, later writers emphasized their knowledge and care when dealing with the natural world. In the 20th century, these images were promoting in a wide range of sources. George Bird Grinnell remarked in passing in an article in 1907, "The almost universal reverence of the Indians for the earth is interesting..."³² William Macleod wrote in *Scientific Monthly* in 1936 that Indians "knew in detail just what the supply of each thing was... and knew where each was to be found when wanted and in approximately what quantity." He argued that conservation was aboriginal with American Indians, and that "white influence was breaking down the native conservation."³³ In the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, N.B Johnson wrote in 1952 that Indians

³⁰ For more on the history of the conservation movement, see Joseph Petulla, *American Environmental History* (Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing Co. 1988)

³¹ quoted in Kat Anderson and Gary Paul Nabhan, "Gardeners in Eden," *Wilderness* 55.194 (1991): 27

³² George Bird Grinnell, "Tenure of Land Among the Indians," *American Anthropologist* 9.1 (1907): 3

³³ William Christie Macleod, "Conservation Among Primitive Hunting Peoples," *Scientific Monthly* 43 (1936): 562 and 564. The idea that Europeans had deleterious effects on the environments they colonized is actually quite old. Grove shows that these concerns existed and were quite prominent in the 16th century.

learned to survive where many men after them perished. . . They lacked in power machinery and may be for this reason, the Indians did not spoil the earth they lived upon by making it over with great slag piles or by exposing the top soil to wind and water erosion. Lack of machinery may have saved them or may be it was a fundamentally different outlook upon life. Indians were content to live with and be one with nature. They were not ambitious to master the universe.

Thus it was not only the Indians' actions that were idealized, but also their attitudes and perceptions of the world. Americans began to elevate Indian outlooks and world views, not just their living conditions. In the American mind, Indians no longer were simply a part of nature, but had a superior understanding of and interaction with nature. Johnson remarked that Indians were "by nature conservationists," and that they had "true insight" into the value of conservation; he implored his readers to "heed our red brothers, especially their spiritual convictions where a better understanding of natural life is involved."³⁴

These ideas were also portrayed in the artwork of the time. The great landscape artists of the time often included Indians in their work. Albert Bierstadt's paintings such as *The Rocky Mountains - Lander's Peak* (1863) and *Last of the Buffalo* (1865) pictured Indians in grandiose natural settings, one in a very harmonious setting, the other in the process of taking a buffalo. Thomas Moran, George Catlin, and many other landscape artists completed similar works. Around this time, various early forms of photography began to take shape, and many photographers found Indians a worthy subject. Edward Curtis was certainly one of the most prominent photographers, often placing subjects in natural settings or in the process of hunting or fishing. Other famous portraits of Indians such as *Sitting Bull* and *Powderface* continued this tradition. Artists in the early 20th century emphasized the Indian's perceived knowledge of the natural world more explicitly; Maynard Dixon's painting *Earth Knower* (c.1931-1935) and Charles Russel's sculpture *Watcher of the Plains* emphasized a connection to the natural world in their work. Artists thus continued the tradition of Noble Savagery and helped to build up the image of American Indians as conservationists in their work (please see Appendix).

³⁴ N.B. Johnson, "The American Indian as Conservationist," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 30 (1952): 334-336

There were many differences in the way that American Indians utilized resources and viewed their interactions of the natural world. To describe the many different and complex ways in which Native Americans interacted with their environment would be impossible here, or in any short article. The level of efficiency and degree of impact varied tremendously among different Indian groups, and their views of nature were fundamentally different from American views. However, the American writers and artists interpreted these differences in ways that had more to do with their concerns about American resource use and outlook than with actual Indian views and actions. Americans used these perceived differences to create images that provided an alternative to, and thus a critique of, American society.

The Environmental Movement and the Rise of Ecology

In the 1960s, concerns about the environment began to reach new heights. Americans began to see themselves entering into an environmental crisis, as Lake Erie was declared dead, the Cuyahoga River burned, and Rachael Carson exposed the widespread impacts of pesticides such as DDT. People across the spectrum of society became concerned about humans' impacts on the environment and their role in the natural world. Americans began to fear that they were affecting the natural world in ways they could not predict or control, and that the damage might be irreversible. Furthermore, it seemed that these problems were inextricably linked not only with technology, but with American values. In 1967, Lynn White's article, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," blamed the Judeo-Christian values which he considered the underpinnings of Western science and society. He called for an overhaul of Western attitudes toward nature.³⁵ The fact that this social commentary was published in Science magazine, a refereed scientific journal, made it a subject of legitimate study. Disillusioned with their society's modern technology and expansionist value systems, Americans began to search for alternatives that were less destructive and more sustainable. The American Indian, or Americans' ideas about Indians, again filled that role, representing a holistic world view that was non-destructive and sustainable over the long term. For example, in 1971 Stewart Udall and Jeff Stansbury co-authored the article, "Indians can teach reverence for

clean environment." They wrote that the Indians and Eskimos of Alaska, "have a strong, intimate bond with the natural world, and all they ask is the opportunity to preserve it."

They remark that the desires of the few preservation-minded Indians,

embody a heritage which dates back to a time when virtually all Indian Americans viewed themselves and other creatures with what we now recognize as an ecological perspective...Regarding resources as finite, and acting in trust for the long-term health of their community, these first Americans embodied the central truths of the modern environmental movement.³⁶

Clearly, the science of ecology played a role in these descriptions. The study of ecology emphasized the interconnectedness and stability of nature. The theories of succession and climax communities, developed at the end of the 19th century, stated that undisturbed natural systems would reach a stable climax condition, making nature seem harmonious, strong, and stable. Ecologists continued developing and studying these ideas in following decades. After World War II, and particularly in the 1960s, ecology began to enter into mainstream America. The science of ecology held the promise of salvation for those disillusioned with technology and concerned about its effects on society. Many felt that an "ecological mindset," one focused on the interconnected, stable relationships in nature, was what America needed to save itself.³⁷ Understanding these complex, ecological relationships often involved studying the undisturbed ecosystem. This usually meant ecosystems without human influence. The idea of the undisturbed, human-free ecosystems emphasized a separation between man and nature; it enforced the idea that humans, especially those of European origins, could only interfere with and damage these stable natural systems. This emphasis on the idea of undisturbed ecosystems was related to thinking about pre-contact America. For centuries, naturalists and philosophers had considered pre-Columbian America to represent undisturbed nature. In the terms of ecological science, America before Columbus came to represent

³⁵ Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" *Science* 155 (1967): 3767

³⁶ Stewart Udall, and Jeff Stansbury, "Indians can teach reverence for clean environment," *The Arizona Republic*, 11 Feb 1971: 30

³⁷ see Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1977) and Krech, *The Ecological Indian*

an undisturbed ecosystem, pristine and clean and without human influence, in spite of significant evidence to the contrary.³⁸

These two ideas were mutually reinforcing: thinking of Indians as a sustainable and non-destructive society encouraged the idea that pre-contact America was disturbance free; thinking of pre-contact America as an undisturbed ecosystem automatically makes the Indians a non-destructive, natural society. Once again, Indians were considered to be a part of nature more than a part of civilization, living as a part of the harmonious and stable ecosystem that existed before the Europeans arrived. These ideas have persisted even in the face of much evidence to the contrary.³⁹ Thus in the Smithsonian publication Seeds of Change: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy, one author comments:

pre-Columbian America was still a First Eden, a pristine natural kingdom. The native people were transparent in the landscape, living as natural elements of the eco-sphere. Their world, the New World of Columbus, was a world of barely perceptible human disturbance.⁴⁰

During this time, ecology enjoyed growing popularity in mainstream America, and the emphasis moved away from succession. Even as ideas about ecology and nature began to change, looking at the role of disturbance in creating and maintaining ecosystems, Indians remained a part of that natural balance in Americans' minds. In 1991, Kat Anderson and Gary Paul Nabhan wrote in their article, *Gardeners in Eden*, "The first people of America not only revered the wilderness, they managed it with loving attention to the needs of diversity and abundance. We might consider doing likewise."⁴¹ Thus, as the natural world became a source of harmony and balance for Americans, so did the Indians; and the Ecological Indian was created. Native Americans were again thought of as part of an Eden; this time not because the lush landscape spontaneously provided for their needs, but because their lives in nature were thought to represent harmony, beauty, strength and stability.

³⁸ see Shepard Krech III, "Ecology and the American Indian," Ideas 3.1 (1994): 4-22 and The Ecological Indian; and William M. Denevan, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americans in 1492," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 82.3 (1992): 369-85

³⁹ See Denevan and Krech

⁴⁰ Shetler in Denevan 370

⁴¹ Kat Anderson and Gary Paul Nabhan, "Gardeners in Eden," Wilderness 55.194 (1991): 27

References to the Indians' stable, harmonious lifeways have proliferated in a variety of media over the last thirty years. Perhaps the most influential depiction of the EcoIndian was the Keep America Beautiful advertising campaign, begun in 1971, featuring Iron Eyes Cody. These ads feature Cody paddling a canoe down a polluted river, or riding a horse through a littered forest. As he comes across a highway and sees people throwing garbage from their cars, he sheds a single tear (see poster in Appendix). These commercials resonated with a huge audience. At the height of their popularity in the 1970's, over \$700 million worth of network air time was donated for the commercials, and Cody had a 94% viewer recognition rate. The commercials were shown throughout part of the 1980's, resulting in over 24 billion household impressions.⁴² The success of this commercial hinged on the fact that it featured a Native American, because Americans already associated Native Americans with nature.⁴³ The image would not have been nearly as profound had it featured a sport fisherman crying in his motorboat, or a middle American weeping while riding her bicycle. Because Americans believed that Indians had a spiritual reverence for and connection to nature, it seemed right that an Indian would then cry for the pollution of nature.

This sentiment has been echoed in countless other places. In 1971 Maggie Wilson wrote a piece for The Arizona Republic entitled, "Indian Ecology: Man Part of a Balanced Universe."⁴⁴ In 1975 Newsweek ran an article that spoke of Indians' "profound reverence for nature."⁴⁵ These sorts of articles continue to abound, with such titles as "Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children;" "Ties that Bind: Native American Beliefs as a Foundation for Environmental Consciousness;" "The Indian Way: Learning to Communicate with Mother Earth;" and "Learning to Walk in Beauty: Critical Comparisons in Ecophilosophies."⁴⁶ These titles

⁴² "Iron Eyes Cody and Keep America Beautiful," Keep America Beautiful, Inc. press release, January 1997

⁴³ Krech, "Ecology and the American Indian" 4-7

⁴⁴ Maggie Wilson, "Indian Ecology: Man Part of a balanced Universe," The Arizona Republic 24 Feb. 1971: Section II p.1

⁴⁵ "Indians: The Great Spirit." Newsweek, 14 May 1975: 71

⁴⁶ Michael J. Caduto, Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children. (Golden CO: Fulcrum, 1989); Annie Booth and Harvey M. Jacobs., "Ties that Bind: Native American Beliefs as a Foundation for Environmental Consciousness," Environmental Ethics 12.1: 27-43; Gary McLain, The Indian Way: Learning to Communicate with Mother Earth. (Santa Fe: John Muir Publications, 1990); Annie Booth, "Learning to Walk in Beauty: Critical Comparisons in Ecophilosophies,"

clearly imply that Native Americans have much more intimate ties with their environment, and that those ties make them superior land managers and stewards.

This idea is also presented in visual formats. Indian characters in television shows and motion pictures often are centered around a spirituality and connection with nature that is not found in the other, non-Indian characters. In the popular television series *Twin Peaks*, there was a Native American deputy working in the sheriff's department. His name was Hawk; he had superior tracking abilities, and would occasionally enlighten the other law enforcement officers with a tidbit of nature-inspired philosophy or wisdom. The movies *Dances with Wolves* and *Last of the Mohicans* also contributed to the EcoIndian image, with Indian characters that hunted spiritually and were wise in their knowledge of the ways of the earth. More recently, the popular Disney version of *Pocahontas* plays the EcoIndian imagery to a hilt. The Indians of Pocahontas' tribe are shown happily farming and spearing fish, singing about the natural cycle of seasons. Pocahontas consults Grandmother Willow, an ancient weeping willow tree, for advice, and teaches John Brown to appreciate nature in all its glory and to "paint with all the colors of the wind." The Europeans in the cartoon, meanwhile, are greedy and rude, and begin to dig for gold and cut down trees the moment they get off the boat. The movie sends a clear message that the Indians in the film were noble, wise, could talk to trees and were one with the earth; while the Europeans were greedy, rude, destructive, and had no such understanding of trees.

The EcoIndian image comes not only with ideas but with pictures; visual images of American Indians are a vital component of the EcoIndian. These pictures are usually of Indians who look like Plains Indians, and in the American mindset the Plains Indian has come to represent Indian-ness. Perhaps the most telling representations of the EcoIndian come in mass produced art. These images, appearing on greeting cards, decorative tiles, lacquered pieces of wood, posters, T-shirts, mugs, pottery, and a wide variety of other media, are the Indian equivalents of a velvet picture of Elvis Presley. They are mass produced and are a staple of any tourist shop in the western United States, and are also found across the US in "new age" stores. These items are truly for mass

Focusing on Bioregionalism, Deep Ecology, Ecological Feminism and Native American Ecological Consciousness," Diss. University of Wisconsin, 1992

consumption, and are of astounding popularity. One example of such an item is a brightly colored picture on a piece of wood of an Indian man, in a loin cloth and holding a spear, contemplating a strikingly beautiful mountain scene. A wolf stands at his side, and an eagle flies above his head. Another item, a poster, shows an Indian woman, with strongly Caucasian features, holding a wolf cub on a stream bank. The reflection in the stream, however, is of two wolves (see Appendix). A third example, this time a T-shirt, has an Indian man's head, with feathers, inside a circle, set against a night sky. Superimposed on the drawing of his head are images of a wolf and an eagle.⁴⁷ These images all portray the Indian as being one with nature, almost more a brave and noble animal than a human.

Today, these images are extremely common and the Ecological Indian is almost taken for granted. It is referenced in passing in countless places that Indians had a closer relationship with nature, lived in harmony with the earth, and were not the wanton destroyers of Mother Nature that we are today. Many born in the 1970s have been raised on the idea that Indians were the first ecologists, the first stewards, and that when it comes to the environment, Indians know better. The EcoIndian, as imaged in American pop-culture, is a man who is spiritually connected to the natural world, and thus has an intimate knowledge of it, a profound respect for it, and makes careful and wise use of it.

The image of the EcoIndian has also been promoted by many American Indians, and has played a role in creating a pan-Indian identity. In addition, many Native American authors and leaders have worked with the image, one of the only truly positive images of Indians. Authors such as N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Louise Ehrdrich have written works of fiction that promote the image in various ways, often telling the story of Indians caught between two worlds, returning to the nature based spirituality to heal themselves.⁴⁸ Other writers such as Vine Deloria have written essays and non-fiction that refer to the EcoIndian image. Thus the image is prominent and promoted by Indians and non-Indians alike.

⁴⁷ Samples obtained at the Garden of the Gods Trading Post, Manitou Springs, CO

⁴⁸ For example, N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968); Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1977)

MEANINGS

There are still many different images of American Indians present in American society, ranging from the drunken fool to the Indian Princess. However, the image of the EcoIndian has gained a great deal of prominence. It is one of the most widely accepted images of American Indians today, perhaps because it is promoted by Indians and non-Indians alike, but also because of its history.

The EcoIndian image is firmly grounded in past images and past traditions. From the earliest descriptions, Indians have been intimately tied with the Natural world in the European mindset. Europeans and Euro-Americans have considered Indians to be outside of civilization, due to their differing property systems, government, religions, and subsistence methods. Europeans interpreted these differences in ways that reflected on their perceptions of their own society and of nature, using them to glorify Nature and cast doubt on civilization or vice versa. The EcoIndian serves the same purpose, providing an alternative to Euro-American attitudes towards and interactions with the Natural world in a time of perceived environmental crisis. This history demonstrates that the EcoIndian image is not necessarily about the realities of Indian life and attitudes but is often a construction that serves to examine Euro-American society. It is a part of a long tradition of thinking about Indians only in ways that are useful for examining Euro-American society. Many European and Euro-American judgments and declarations about the value or worth of Indian societies have not been based on an absolute standard or on realistic observations of Indian life, but on their own changing conceptions of the merits of Nature and civilization. Americans have often simplified, constructed and distorted Indian lifestyles to suit their own purposes. The EcoIndian image is a continuation of the trend of using images of American Indians as a form of social commentary.

More importantly, however, the idea of Indians as natural beings has become an important part of how Americans identify and understand themselves. Because this idea of Indians has been a part of the larger struggle to understand the values of civilization and nature, it is deeply embedded and ingrained in American culture. Thus, there is a very strong idea of what Indians are that is closely tied to an idea of what Americans are. The idea of the Indian is that of the idealized natural man, the EcoIndian, an Indian of the past. Americans tend to think of “real Indians” as those that lived before European

contact. As Berkhofer points out, Americans “romanticize the dead Indian at the expense of the living ones.”⁴⁹ This tendency gives ironic new meaning to the old saying, “the only good Indian is a dead Indian,” as Americans have for several centuries glorified only the Indians of the past. It is this idea that is so firmly embedded in American culture.

The EcoIndian thus has meaning not only as a commentary on and alternative to modern technology and resource use, but also as a fundamental part of Americans’ definition of themselves and civilized society. The EcoIndian has become a sort of mythology, helping Americans to define and understand themselves and nature. It also provides an example and an inspiration for those disillusioned with modern civilization. Hence, there is some understanding of the meanings of the EcoIndian image for non-Indian Americans and the environmental movement. The question of what these images and ideas mean for current Indian societies and their interactions with the environment remains unanswered.

The Narragansett Indian Tribe in Rhode Island and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation in Connecticut provide an interesting opportunity to study these questions. The reservations for these two tribes are within an hour’s drive of each other. However, the experiences of the two tribes are vastly different. The Narragansetts are a small tribe, with little economic development and high levels of poverty and unemployment. They have attempted a variety of development strategies, including plans for a casino, but have not yet been successful. The Pequots, an even smaller tribe, have been extremely successful economically; among other things, they own Foxwoods Resort Casino, the largest casino in the western hemisphere. These two tribes thus have very different land uses and interactions with their environments. However, both tribes have been embroiled in conflicts with surrounding communities regarding the environment and environmental regulation with regard to their actual proposed developments. These cases thus provide a chance to examine how the EcoIndian has been involved in shaping the resource use of these tribes and how it has been used in the conflicts with surrounding communities.

THE NARRAGANSETTS AND MASHANTUCKET PEQUOTS

⁴⁹ Berkhofer 532

USE OF THE IMAGE BY THE NARRAGANSETT AND MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT NATIONS

A first step in examining the meaning of the EcoIndian image to the Narragansett and Mashantucket Pequot Indians is to examine how they have treated the image. A survey of official statements about the Tribes' interactions with the environment and about the environment in general shows that both groups exposit ideas similar to those behind the EcoIndian – the Indian in nature, as steward of nature, intimately connected to the natural world.

The Narragansetts have done this in many ways. These ideas are apparent in statements made primarily for mass consumption outside of the Tribe in newspapers and commercials. Many of these have focused around the proposed gaming facility on the Narragansett lands. Perhaps the most clear and significant example comes from a television commercial created to try to persuade voters of the benefits of the gaming facility and assuage their fears about its impact. In this commercial, the Narragansett Medicine Man Lloyd Wilcox states about land use, "We're talking about 10,000, 15,000 years, living well within our environment, leaving no trail, leaving no trace, keeping it pristine. So, if you ask me what it means to me, how about everything?"⁵⁰ The Narragansetts have even trumped the Pequots: when comparing their proposal to Foxwoods, a tribal spokesman said that the Narragansetts, "are more sensitive to the environment and to land-use issues, and that they will use as little land as possible to fulfill their dreams of economic independence."⁵¹ There have been examples of the Narragansett people referring to this idea in response to other issues as well. For example, when a Narragansett man was charged with illegal fishing off the reservation, he said, "We're the natural environmentalists, and (the government is) playing politics with us."⁵² A sign on the Pow-wow Committee office reads, "Healing Mother Earth - Past, Present and Future." Statements such as these clearly embrace the idea that Indians

⁵⁰ Quoted in Tony De Paul, "The Narragansetts hone sales pitch; The tribe begins airing ads and will hold a series of meetings to sway public opinion," The Providence Journal 8 October 1994: 1A, online, Nexis/Lexis, 16 Dec. 1996

⁵¹ Mark Micheli, "Casino Would Pave Way for Indian Nation," Providence Business News 3 Aug. 1992: 1, online, Nexis/Lexis, 16 Dec. 1996

⁵² quoted in "Indian battles state over fishing rights," United Press International 8 May 1987, BC cycle, Washington Distribution, online, Nexis/Lexis, 16 Dec. 1996

have always been and continue to be the first ecologists, the original stewards, and are environmentalists by nature.

However, what is perhaps more interesting is that these ideas are also used in internal Tribal documents, particularly environmental and natural resource management programs and documents. It is significant that these documents are not of the public record, and thus are not made available to the general public outside of the Tribe. Therefore, these statements are less likely to be geared toward convincing outsiders of the Narragansetts' environmental awareness. One example is the Forestry Program. This program involved writing a forest history of the Narragansett lands, as well as creating a Forest Management Plan. The history begins, "The Forest History of the Narragansett Tribe is intrinsically linked with the history of the Narragansett people." It goes on to tell a story of creation in which the first woman and man were created from a tree, and "the trees gave the Narragansetts life." The history then states that, "As the trees were cut down to make room for the European invaders who coveted their lands, so were the Narragansetts cut down. Both have survived."⁵³ This introduction emphasizes a deep, fundamental connection between the Narragansetts and their environment. This connection is elaborated in the Forest Management Plan. In the Goals and Objectives section, there is a list of values associated with the Tribal forest, in order of priority. The first one reads:

Traditional, spiritual and aesthetic values: The Reservation area has long [sic] history of being the center of Narragansett life. Narragansett people identify with the sacred places, and find spiritual renewal on the Reservation lands. It is a place for Tribal members to reaffirm their relationship with the earth and life itself..

The sixth value is education and research. Here the document states, "As a people sensitive to the great circle of life, and committed to maintaining the environmental integrity of their lands, the Narragansetts see the Reservation as a place for instruction of their children in the traditions and philosophy of their people."⁵⁴ These statements are clearly congruent with EcoIndian imagery. They emphasize the spiritual connection to

⁵³ Lois Winn, "A Forest History of the Lands of the Narragansett," The Narragansett Indian Tribe, Department of Natural Resources: 1

⁵⁴ "The Narragansett Indian Tribe Forest Management Plan," The Narragansett Indian Tribe, Department of Natural Resources: 40

the Earth, a deep understanding of the natural cycles of the land, and an inherent desire and ability to protect the land. Another example is the Land Use Plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement Area, created by the Rhode Island Office of State Planning and the Narragansetts. This document is of the public record, and is therefore both an internal and external document. In the section describing methodology, there is a section entitled “Philosophical Approach.” This section states that the methodology was:

conditioned by several fundamental “givens”...perhaps most significant, the people for whom the plan is being prepared, the Narragansett Tribe of Indians, have a culturally based relationship with the land and a fundamental understanding and respect for the natural cycles, processes and values found within the area.⁵⁵

Again, this statement is clearly congruent with EcoIndian imagery - taking as a “given,” as something fundamentally known and understood, that the Narragansett people have a connection with the natural world that makes them the natural stewards of it.

The Mashantucket Pequots also use this sort of imagery, although in different ways than the Narragansetts have. While the Pequots did not make internal documents available, their use of these ideas in public statements is easily observable. The Pequot’s literature often emphasizes the lifeways of the earlier Pequots and their connection to and reliance upon the natural world. Many do not go much beyond stating the importance of the natural environment to the Pequots: their dependence on both agriculture and marine resources, the importance of the swamp in providing refuge after the great massacre of 1637.⁵⁶ Others emphasize a deeper connection with nature. For example, in a letter of introduction to a booklet on the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Tribal Chairman Richard Hayward remarks, “Four hundred years ago, my ancestors fished, farmed and hunted on traditional Pequot lands. Ours was a creative, vibrant, and peaceful culture, living in harmony with nature.”⁵⁷ The Pequots have also promoted these ideas within

⁵⁵ George W. Johnson et al, “Land Use Plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement Area,” Rhode Island Office of State Planning, Providence 1986: IV-1

⁵⁶ See “The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: Clash of Cultures” and “The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation: The new Museum and research Center,” both leaflets printed by the Tribe and available through the Department of Public Relations.

⁵⁷ Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, published by the Tribe, available through the Department of Public Relations, preface

their developments. For example, in Foxwoods, the interior decorations have two main themes: nature and Indians. The nature imagery is very strong and is expressed through stained glass flowers in windows and on walls, plants and flowers in the carpets and molded into the walls and columns. One set of escalators features an indoor waterfall with mist machines and sculptures of gigantic fish swimming around it. There is also a great deal of Indian art and art about Indians within the facility. There are several sculptures of Indian men with bow and arrow, shooting at the sky. There are also sculptures of other Indian men and women, as well as several paintings showing Indians in natural settings. Much of this art features Indians that appear to be dressed in the Western Plains Indian tradition, which is consistent with EcoIndian imagery. However, perhaps the most striking image is that of the Rainmaker, a sculpture in one of the main atriums near casino one. The sculpture is very large, and is of an Indian man in a loin cloth and a feather headdress. The sculpture is made of a somewhat translucent material and is lit with green lights so it appears to glow. The figure is kneeling on top of a rocky structure, and is pointing a bow and arrow at the sky. During the Rainmaker Show, there are lights and a fake rainfall. Thus, as visitors gamble, they are surrounded with plenty of beautiful natural imagery and visions of Indians calling down the rain. This certainly promotes the idea that Indians are one with nature, even in casinos. If visitors would like to take this idea home with them, they have the chance to purchase some of the EcoIndian artifacts similar to those described in the above section in the gift shop the Pequots operate within Foxwoods.

The Pequots have also used these ideas to assure the public of their commitment to protecting the environment. It is perhaps most telling to look back to 1991, when they were just beginning work on the casino. At that time, one spokesman remarked:

The tribe is very sensitive about its surroundings and environment and does not want glitz and neon. That wouldn't be appropriate for the New England setting. They are interested in nature, beauty and serenity, and plans are for the one-story building to fit in beautifully with that setting.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Alfred J. Lucini, quoted by Rich Weizel, "State Fights Indians Over Planned Casino at Ledyard Reservation," The New York Times 24 March 1991, late ed.: 12CN1, online, Nexis/Lexis, 17 December 1996

Clearly, those plans changed. As will be discussed below, Foxwoods has grown into a massive development complex with significant environmental impacts. However, the Mashantuckets' stated commitment to the environment did not change. Early the following year, after the casino had opened, a spokeswoman for the tribe stated, "We have a pristine environment and (the tribe is) probably more interested in preserving the environment than anybody around here."⁵⁹ In 1994, in response to bad press concerning other proposed developments, another spokesman commented, "People should look at what we have done and how we are stewards of the land."⁶⁰ All of these statements imply that the Pequot Indians are connected to their natural setting and have a deep interest in preserving it.

Thus both the Narragansetts and the Mashantucket Pequots have used imagery and ideas that are congruent with the EcoIndian. These examples are, for the most part, official statements of attitudes and beliefs. They do not give any indication of whether these attitudes stem from an ancient cultural tradition or have recently become part of the rhetoric as the EcoIndian has gained prominence in outside society. Nor do these examples necessarily represent the beliefs of the tribal members, or give any indication of how deeply these beliefs are held. They do, however, show very clearly that the idea behind the EcoIndian, that of the Indian in nature and as steward of nature, is very much a part of the official discourse of both tribes. The question then, is how deep the rhetoric goes. Do their actions match their words?

RESOURCE USE AND MANAGEMENT

One way to begin answering this question is to examine the resource use and management practices of the Narragansetts and the Mashantucket Pequots. How the Tribes have cared for and used their resources, as well as any extra measures they have taken to protect their environment indicates how seriously they take their stated role as stewards of the environment.

⁵⁹ Theresa Bell, quoted by Liza Horan, "Connecticut Indian Tribe Set to Open Gambling Casino," 13 February 1992 AM cycle, Reuters North American Wire, online, Nexis/Lexis, 17 December 1996

⁶⁰ Jackson T. King, quoted by Eleanor Charles, "Foxwoods' Expansion Plans Trouble the Region," The New York Times 28 August 1994, late ed.: Section 9 p.7, online, Nexis/Lexis, 17 December 1996

The Narragansett Tribe of Indians

Background - Narragansett lands and holdings

The Narragansett settlement lands encompass 1,943.5 acres, and were created in 1978 through negotiations stemming from two court cases. In 1975, the Narragansett Tribe of Indians brought two lawsuits against the Director of the Department of Environmental Management and private land owners. The Narragansetts claimed that the State of Rhode Island had violated the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790 by selling and buying the Narragansett lands without the permission of the Federal government. Therefore, the Narragansetts still had legal claim to those lands. These claims caused the clouding of many titles in the town of Charlestown, even for those whose lands were not involved in the suit. Because of the economic stress associated with these claims, the Governor of Rhode Island initiated negotiations to settle these cases out of court. The outcome of those negotiations was a Joint Memorandum of Understanding, signed by all parties in 1978. Pursuant to that agreement, the United States Congress passed the Rhode Island Indian Claims Settlement Act, and Rhode Island passed the Narragansett Land Management Corporation Act. In these acts, the State created a public corporation to manage and hold lands for the Narragansett Indian Tribe and gave the corporation approximately 900 acres of land, referred to as the public settlement lands. The Federal Government provided \$3.5 million to the Corporation to purchase approximately 900 acres of land from private land owners, referred to as the private settlement lands. In these documents it was agreed that the settlement lands and the activities of the Corporation would be subject to all civil and criminal jurisdiction of the State of Rhode Island. The one exception was hunting and fishing regulations; the Narragansett Land Management Corporation was given the right and responsibility to regulate fish and wildlife on the settlement lands. It was also agreed that all of the public settlement lands and at least 75% of the private settlement lands would remain undeveloped, and held for conservation purposes in perpetuity. The acts also stated that any use of the settlement lands would be contingent upon the adoption of a land use plan, to be created by the State Planning Department and the Narragansett Land Management Corporation. The status of the settlement lands has changed since their creation in 1978. In 1983, the Narragansetts gained federal recognition, and their lands were transferred to the Narragansett Tribe of

Indians. The Narragansett Land Management Corporation was dissolved. In 1988, the lands were transferred to the Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs to be held in trust for the Narragansett Tribe. The Tribe has since acquired 31 acres near the settlement lands, and also obtained 900 acres in Westerly known as the Crandall Homestead.

Current Resource Use

The settlement lands today closely resemble those of 1978, as there has been very little development on those lands. Current developments include tribal offices, a tribal health center, the Four Winds community center, a housing development, a community longhouse, and the meetinghouse church. In addition, some tribal members use the settlement land for subsistence activities. Representatives from the Narragansett Department of Natural Resources stated that some tribal members use the settlement lands for hunting deer, fishing, and gathering plants, wild berries and herbs. However, they were not able to give a quantitative estimate as to the number of tribal members engaging in these activities. In addition, Tribal members cut firewood on the settlement lands for the elders of the tribe as well as for themselves. Again, the Department of Natural Resources did not give an estimate of the amount of firewood cut each year.⁶¹

The Narragansett Tribe has planned for more intensive land uses. Plans for a gaming facility have been proposed several times. In addition, the Tribe hopes to engage in commercial agriculture and aquaculture, and has also proposed to develop light commercial logging.

Current Resource Management

Resource management on the settlement lands is difficult to define, because it falls under different governing bodies and levels of government, and is frequently under dispute. The Settlement Act and the Narragansett Land Management Act required that all of the public settlement lands and at least 75% of the private settlement lands “shall

⁶¹ Dinalyn Spears, Environmental Specialist/Biologist, Narragansett Indian Tribe Department of Natural Resources, personal interview, 28 February 1997. Kathryn Maxwell, Environmental Specialist/Comprehensive Planner, Narragansett Indian Tribe Department of Natural Resources, personal interview, 5 February 1997.

not be improved and developed and shall be held in perpetuity for conservation purposes.”⁶² In addition, the Acts provided that a Land Use Plan (LUP) be created that was mutually acceptable to the town of Charlestown and the Tribe.

The Land Use Plan was prepared by the Rhode Island Office of State Planning for the Narragansett Indian Tribe, and was completed in 1986, forming the first level of resource management on the settlement lands. The LUP inventoried the physical resources of the settlement lands and surrounding areas, including the geology, water resources, soils, vegetation, and natural heritage. In addition, the LUP surveyed human and cultural resources, including land use, roads, public utilities, and historic sites and areas. From this information, the Plan performed a land capability analysis, categorizing the settlement lands according to their suitability for development and conservation. The categories created were permanent conservation areas, primary development suitability areas, secondary development suitability areas, and primary conservation suitability areas. It was then left to the Tribe to delineate conservation areas and development areas under the following guidelines: all public settlement lands would be designated as permanent conservation areas; all settlement lands would be considered conservation areas until the tribe designates them as development areas; and the Tribe could designate development lands in increments of any size it deems necessary, provided the total acreage did not exceed 25% of the private settlement lands. In addition, the LUP states that while selecting development areas, the Tribe will:

- a) maximize the selection of area indicated as being “Primary Development Suitability Areas”...
- b) minimize the selection of areas indicated as being “Secondary Development Suitability Areas”...
- c) avoid, to the extent possible, selection of areas indicated as being “Primary Conservation Suitability Areas”...
- d) relate selection of development areas to vehicular accessibility, the availability of electrical power and other utilities (if available) and the location of existing Tribal facilities and previously developed areas to the extent appropriate or necessary.⁶³

The Plan then delineated acceptable uses for development and conservation areas, and created standards for use and development.

⁶² General Laws of Rhode Island, 37-18-10

The Land Use Plan thus provided a base of knowledge and standards, but left the actual designations of development and conservation areas to the tribe, expecting the Tribe to follow the guidelines laid out in the Settlement Act and the LUP. In 1990, the Narragansett Tribe enacted the Narragansett Tribe of Indians Zoning Ordinance that designates lands as Cultural Resource Protection areas, Conservation Areas, and Development Areas. Based on a rough comparison, the zoning map appears largely consistent with the guidelines and designations of the Land Use Plan. Some of the areas within the Permanent Conservation Areas designated by the Land Use Plan and the Settlement Act are designated by the Tribe as Cultural Resource Protection Areas. However, the Cultural Resource Protection designation appears to be a more protective standard. In the Cultural Resource Protection District, the acceptable uses are:

- a) Cemeteries and burial grounds
- b) Religious and ceremonial structures and uses
- c) Historical sites and features
- d) Archaeological sites and features
- e) Pow-wow grounds
- f) Tribal recreation
- g) Other activities, structures, and uses which express the culture and traditions of the Narragansett Indian Tribe⁶⁴

These are all uses that are consistent with those defined by the Land Use Plan for the Conservation Areas. However, many of the uses that are allowed for the Conservation Areas in the Land Use Plan are not allowed in these Cultural Resource Protection Areas. Thus the Tribe has provided a higher level of protection than is provided by the Land Use Plan.

However, the Tribe has made other changes to the Land Use Plan's definitions that reveal interesting changes in Tribal priorities, and have the potential to significantly reduce the amount of protection. Figure 1 shows the appropriate uses and activities as defined in both the LUP and the Zoning Ordinance (ZO). The acceptable uses delineated by the tribe for Conservation Areas include all of those listed by the LUP, and use the same language as in the LUP. However, the Tribe also added to the list "uses accessory or customarily incident to an acceptable use within a development area", and, "similar

⁶³ Land Use Plan for the Narragansett Indian Land Claim Settlement Area, pVII-5

⁶⁴ Narragansett Tribe of Indians Zoning Ordinance, adopted 1990

uses and activities.” These additions allow for a very open interpretation and could ostensibly allow for a wide variety of activities associated with developments in the Development Areas to occur in the Conservation Area.

There were also substantial changes made in the definition of a Development Area. Figure 2 lists the accepted uses and activities for development areas in the LUP and the ZO. There are several important changes. First, it is clear that the Zoning Ordinance has added several accepted uses: hotels, motels, etc; restaurants; conference room facilities; extraction of sand, gravel and other earth materials; and “similar uses and activities.” In addition, they have changed some of the definitions of other uses. For example, under recreation, the ZO allows for “*commercial* recreational uses and facilities” (emphasis added) and does not require explicit permission for non-tribal members’ use. In addition, under accessory uses, the LUP requires that accessory or incidental uses be on the same site as the primary development, while the Zoning Ordinance does not.

These changes taken together with those made in the acceptable uses of a conservation area allow for much more use and more commercial use of the settlement lands. The Zoning Ordinance clears the way for developments on the reservation similar to those of the Mashantucket Pequots - hotels, resort centers, and gaming facilities. The changes in statements regarding uses accessory and incidental to uses in the development areas could allow these development to spill over into the conservation areas. In addition,

Figure 1: Comparison of LUP and the ZO regarding uses and activities for Conservation Areas

<p>From the Land Use Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Agriculture, including farms and orchards, raising of livestock and waterfowl, accessory structures specifically excluding produce stands or stores, greenhouses or similar commercial structures. 2) Aquaculture in a natural water body, impoundment, or tank. 3) Collection or gathering of indigenous herbs, fruits, berries, nuts or other native produce 4) Environmental Education or nature study facilities, including trails, signs, and support facilities such as shelters or parking. 5) Hunting, fishing, or trapping of fish and game in accordance with the Tribal regulations 6) Research and scientific investigations or studies 7) Silviculture or forests management in Accordance with a Tribally-approved forestry management plan, including thinning, pruning, and selective cutting of timber and fuel wood; replanting of harvest areas; fire suppression and control practices and soil erosion control 8) Wildlife management including habitat improvement through limited clearing or thinning of vegetation, planting of food and cover sources; introduction or stocking of wildlife species, and regulation of animal populations through hunting and trapping 9) Structures, parking areas, roads and trails which are found by the Tribe to be essential to service the uses or activities listed above. 10) Roads found by the Tribe to be essential to provide access to an area designated for development 	<p>From the Tribal Zoning Ordinance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All uses, structures, and activities allowed in the Cultural Resource Protection District. 2) Agriculture, including farms and orchards, raising of livestock and waterfowl, accessory structures specifically excluding produce stands or stores, greenhouses or similar commercial structures. 3) Aquaculture in a natural water body, impoundment, or tank. 4) Collection or gathering of indigenous herbs, fruits, berries, nuts or other native produce 5) Environmental Education or nature study facilities, including trails, signs, and support facilities such as shelters or parking. 6) Hunting, fishing, or trapping of fish and game in accordance with the Tribal regulations 7) Research and scientific investigations or studies 8) Silviculture or forests management in Accordance with a Tribally-approved forestry management plan, including thinning, pruning, and selective cutting of timber and fuel wood; replanting of harvest areas; fire suppression and control practices and soil erosion control 9) Wildlife management including habitat improvement through limited clearing or thinning of vegetation, planting of food and cover sources; introduction or stocking of wildlife species, and regulation of animal populations through hunting and trapping 10) Roads found by the Tribe to be essential to provide access to an area designated for development 11) Uses accessory or customarily incident to an acceptable use within a development area. 12) Similar uses and activities. 13) Structures, parking areas, roads and trails which are found by the Tribe to be essential to service the uses or activities listed above.
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Figure 2: Comparison of LUP and the ZO regarding uses and activities for Development Areas

From the Land Use Plan:	From the Zoning Ordinance:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All uses and activities allowed within the designated conservation areas. 2) Residential uses 3) Commercial uses including greenhouses, shops or stands for the sale or exchange of conventional agricultural or aquacultural commodities; stores for the sale or exchange of groceries, clothing, specialty goods, hardware, fuel (including motor vehicle fuels), drugs or other items of general merchandise. 4) Tribal facilities including medical clinic or office; nursing, convalescent or rest home; community center or recreation hall; museum or cultural center; day care center; school library; places of worship; and burial grounds 5) Recreation uses including open meeting areas and overnight group camping areas (to be used by non-tribal members only with the express permission of the Tribe) and fish hatchery. 6) Industrial uses necessary for the proper utilization of the settlement area's resources and products such as the following: blacksmith shops and liveries; sawmills, lumber storage and sales and fuel wood storage and sales; facilities for energy production, transmission, storage and distribution; agricultural equipment sales and service; and farm product processing and storage. 7) Uses accessory or customarily incident to an acceptable use within development area and located on the same site. 8) Roadways, parking facilities, and utilities necessary to support acceptable uses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All uses and activities allowed within the designated conservation areas. 2) Residential uses 3) Commercial uses including greenhouses, shops or stands for the sale or exchange of conventional agricultural or aquacultural commodities; stores for the sale or exchange of groceries, clothing, specialty goods, hardware, fuel (including motor vehicle fuels), drugs or other items of general merchandise 4) Hotels, motels, inns and bed and breakfast establishments. 5) Restaurants 6) Conference room facilities 7) Tribal facilities including medical clinic or office; nursing, convalescent or rest home; community center or recreation hall; museum or cultural center; day care center; school, library and places of spiritual ceremony. 8) Commercial recreational uses and facilities including open meeting areas and overnight group camping areas. 9) Industrial uses necessary for the proper utilization of the settlement area's resources and products such as the following: blacksmith shops and liveries; for energy production, transmission, storage and distribution; agricultural equipment sales and services; and farm product processing and storage. 10) Extraction of sand gravel and other earth materials. 11) Roadways, parking facilities, and utilities necessary to support acceptable uses. 12) Uses accessory or customarily incident to an acceptable use within a development area. 13) Similar uses and activities. <p>Uses prohibited in all zoning districts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Any heavy industrial use which is obnoxious by reason of emission of noxious odors, excessive smoke, gases, dust, noise, or vibration, hazardous waste, or by reason of danger of fire or explosion. 2) Junkyard, motor vehicle wrecking yard, or storage or more than one unregistered motor vehicle on any one lot in any zoning district. 3) Nuclear waste storage or facility. 4) Nuclear fission or fusion. 5) Sanitary Landfills

the Zoning Ordinance allows for more extractive uses of the settlement lands, such as sand and gravel mining and commercial logging. Overall, the Land Use Plan allows for a much lower level of economic development of the settlement lands, and accounts for low intensity and subsistence uses of the lands. The Zoning Ordinance allows for higher intensity, expansive economic development.

The Zoning Ordinance, however, also lists specifically prohibited uses, which the Land Use Plan does not. However, this may be because the acceptable uses listed in the Land Use Plan are more strictly defined than those in the Zoning Act.

The Land Use Plan and the Zoning Act thus form the base for resource management by regulating land use. Other resources are managed through the Narragansett Indian Tribe Department of Natural Resources(NDNR). This department employs four people: the Director of Natural Resources, a Comprehensive Planner/Environmental Specialist, an Environmental Specialist/Biologist, and a Wetlands Specialist. This department administers several environmental management programs, primarily in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The relationships between the Tribe, the EPA and the State are confusing and difficult to navigate for people on all sides of the equation. Because different federal acts apply differently to Indian lands, it is difficult to characterize the implementation of environmental laws on Indian lands. However, in 1984 EPA created a Policy for the Administration of Environmental Programs on Indian Reservations. This policy affirms the Agency's commitment to work with tribes on a "government to government" basis, to recognize tribal governments as the primary parties for implementing environmental policies and programs, to take affirmative steps to encourage and assist tribes in assuming regulatory responsibility, to assure that tribal concerns and interests are considered in all policies that affect reservations, and to assure compliance with environmental statutes on Indian reservations.⁶⁵ Under this policy, the EPA's American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO), "coordinates the Agency-wide effort to strengthen public health and environmental protection in Indian Country, with a special emphasis on

⁶⁵ William D. Ruckelshaus, "EPA Policy for the Administration of Environmental Programs on Indian Reservations," 8 November 1984. <http://www.epa.gov/indian/84ndn.html>

building Tribal capacity to administer their own environmental programs.”⁶⁶ Depending on the federal law involved, tribal governments can gain primacy, or “Treatment in the same Manner as a State” (TAS)⁶⁷ for particular programs. This designation allows tribes to promulgate and enforce their own environmental programs under these laws. The Clean Water Act provides specific measures for tribes to gain TAS for different sections of the Act. Other federal laws are less specific and EPA has worked out methods of delegating responsibility to tribes who have the capacity to administer them. EPA also gives General Assistance Grants to tribes to allow tribes to hire an Environmental Specialist or similar personnel, and provide minimal equipment. In EPA’s Region 1 (which covers the Northeastern states and nine tribes, including the Mashantucket Pequots and the Narragansetts), no tribes have primacy/TAS/program approval for any law other than the Clean Water Act. However, many tribes are expected to receive TAS designation in the next five years for the Safe Drinking Water Act Public Water Supervision Program, Underground Injection Control, Clean Air Act, Municipal Solid Waste Program, Superfund, and the Hazardous Waste Program, as well as regulatory responsibility for pesticides.

The Narragansetts have worked and are currently working on several programs with EPA. The Tribe has attained TAS under the Clean Water Act for the Clean Lakes Grant Program, Nonpoint Source Program, and in the past has received a Water Quality Management Grant. In addition, the Tribe has a grant to work on wetlands protection. Most of the Tribe’s work on environmental management is thus focused around their water resources. This is appropriate as the settlement lands lie over parts of the Pawcatuck Sole Source Aquifer, the Narragansett Indian Sole Source Aquifer, and contain Deep Pond, Schoolhouse Pond, Indian Cedar Swamp, and many associated wetlands. The Tribe has created a Water Quality Management Program under these grants to protect their water resources. This Plan provides an extensive inventory of

⁶⁶ American Indian Environmental Office - Overview. <http://www.epa.gov/indian/overaieo.html>

⁶⁷ TAS is the acronym used by the EPA. Originally the descriptive language was “treatment as a state,” and thus TAS was a logical acronym. When the language was changed, the acronym was not, which leaves a seemingly ill-fitting acronym.

Tribal water resources, an analysis of the threats to water quality, a description of uses, and an analysis of current and possible future protection strategies.⁶⁸

In addition, the Tribe is currently working with EPA to create a non-point source pollution program. Current threats to the Tribe's water resources come mainly from non-point sources off the settlement lands. Bordering the settlement lands to the north is the United Nuclear Corporation Recovery Systems plant. This site was a uranium junk scrap recovery facility from 1964-1980. Although solid wastes were shipped off the facility, liquid wastes were originally disposed of into the Pawcatuck River, and later in lined ponds and trenches. Testing done by the Rhode Island Resources Board in 1974-1977 indicated above background levels of radioactivity and nitrates in the ground water. In addition, a defunct chemical factory on Route 91 and the Kenyon Piece and Dye factory have been identified as potential sources of non-point pollution. The Tribe also identified storm run-off and failed septic systems in neighboring residential developments as threats to water quality.⁶⁹

In addition to working with EPA on a non-point source pollution program to address these threats, the Tribe is working on several monitoring programs. The Tribe has participated in the Rhode Island Watershed Watch Monitoring Program conducted by the University of Rhode Island since April of 1990. Through this program, the Tribe monitors Schoolhouse Pond and Deep Pond for a variety of water quality indicators. The Tribe has also recently drilled wells to monitor ground water as part of a well-head protection program, although they have yet to collect any data from them.

While most of the work of the Tribe has focused around water quality issues, they have also worked on several other programs with EPA. One of these is waste management. The Tribe has developed a Bio-Solid Waste Management Plan to address potential waste disposal needs created by planned future developments. In addition, the Tribe is struggling to deal with municipal solid waste disposal problems on the reservation. While the Zoning Ordinance does not allow for landfills on the reservation,

⁶⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, information in this section about the general activities and regulations of the Narragansett Tribe are from personal interviews with Dinalyn Spears, 28 February 1997 and Kathryn Maxwell 10 Dec 1996 and 5 February 1997.

⁶⁹ "Narragansett Indian Tribe Water Quality Management Plan," Narragansett Indian Tribe, Department of Natural Resources: 34-36

the Tribe has had problems with illegal dumping on the reservation. Dinalyn Spears, the Environmental Specialist/Biologist with the NDNR has participated in an EPA workshop on solid waste management, and is working on addressing this issue.

The Tribe does not currently participate in the Clean Air Program, and does not monitor air quality. However, the EPA has encouraged the Narragansetts to work on this program, and the Tribe is expected to receive TAS by 1998 for Clean Air. The EPA also expects the Tribe to receive TAS/ program approval for the Clean Water Act Water Quality Standards Program, the Safe Drinking Water Act Public Water Supervision Program, and the Municipal Solid Waste Program by the year 2001.

While EPA is the primary agency for addressing environmental issues on Indian lands, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) also works on some environmental issues. The Narragansetts contracts with BIA under four programs. Under Wildlife and Parks, the Tribe works to manage and protect wildlife and natural resources, as well as maintain and upgrade the Parks and Recreation Department, maintain tribal roads, and enforce tribal regulations. Under the Settlement Acts, the Tribe was given the explicit right and responsibility to regulate fishing and hunting on the settlement lands. However, the status of such regulation remains unclear. The Environmental Specialist for the Tribe stated that there are several families that use the reservation to hunt and fish, but that such activity is largely unregulated. Tribal members are allowed to hunt and fish there, and to bring friends who are not Tribal members; non-Tribal members are not allowed to hunt or fish on their own. However, Spears stated that outside of this regulation, the activities of the members are not carefully monitored or regulated, and that Tribal members are resistant to formal regulation because they feel their cultural traditions serve that purpose in a more appropriate way.⁷⁰

The Narragansetts have also created a forestry program under BIA. Under this program, the Tribe conducted a forest history, and created a Forest Management Program. The goals of this program are to maintain the traditional, spiritual and aesthetic values of the forest; to provide for watershed protection; to continue subsistence use of the forest; to provide for increased recreational use of the forest; to provide for limited commercial timber production; and provide opportunities for forest-based environmental

and cultural education and research. Although the Forest Management Program planned a variety of management programs, most are not currently being carried out. Currently the Tribe cuts firewood for the elders of the community, and individual Tribal members use the forest for a variety of subsistence practices. The Tribe also has programs for road maintenance and protection of water quality with BIA.

The Narragansett Tribe's approach to environmental management is guided by the Tribe's goal to provide for the health, safety and general welfare of the current and future members of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. The Tribe has a stated commitment to provide at least as much protection as the State, if not more; the Settlement Act also states that the settlement lands are subject to the civil and criminal jurisdiction of the State of Rhode Island. This clause has been interpreted to mean that the State has civil regulatory jurisdiction over the settlement lands. However, the Tribe is also severely limited in its resources, in terms of money, equipment and qualified personnel. In addition, the Tribe has only recently begun to assume regulatory responsibility, and thus is just beginning to learn the processes. Therefore, the regulations promulgated by the Tribe are not necessarily of the same caliber as those of the State. The EPA's Tribal Coordinator for the Narragansetts considers the environmental regulation of the Tribe to be in its beginning stages, as the Tribe learns the subtleties of regulation and builds its capacity to implement and enforce programs. Although the Tribe has worked hard to build its ability to manage the environment, the actual monitoring and implementation is scattered.

Currently, with so little development on the reservation, there seems to be few problems. It remains to be seen how increased development would be handled by the Narragansett Tribe. When the Narragansetts had proposals on the table for a gaming facility, they strongly resisted conducting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an EIS is required whenever a development that involves a federal agency may have a "significant impact" on the environment. An EIS involves extensive study of the possible impacts, possible alternatives to the planned action, and also allows for public comment and review. However, the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC), which was the federal

⁷⁰Dinalyn Spears, 28 Feb. 1997

agency involved, found that the proposed facility would have “no significant impact,” and thus only required an Environmental Assessment (EA) – a less thorough review. Although the gaming facility proposal has been negated for the moment, the question of environmental review remains uncertain. It is not clear how the Tribe will handle any future development proposals and the possible environmental effects.

The Tribe’s resistance to formal environmental regulation and review may be due to cultural differences over how environmental resources should be managed. Spears and the Kathryn Maxwell, the NDNR Environmental Specialist/Comprehensive Planner, both stated that Tribal members prefer to rely on cultural traditions to protect the environment, and that this sometimes leads to reluctance on the part of the Tribal Body to accept written environmental regulations. Maxwell stated that there were cultural ways of protecting resources that were passed down through tradition: “The method itself is part of the culture...the cultural considerations are relatively far more important and relatively far more cohesive within the Tribe.” She stated that while the actual written regulations may seem very flexible, “the foundations are really much more cohesive and protective.”⁷¹ Thus it seems that the Narragansetts may consider it a part of their heritage and cultural traditions to protect their environment through tradition, rather than relying on the “white man’s way” of formal regulation. However, it is not clear how effective these traditions are or would be. Neither Spears nor Maxwell commented further on the nature of these traditions or how they serve to protect natural resources. Again, while there do not seem to be significant environmental problems on the reservation at the moment, there have been proposals for a gaming facility that could potentially have very large impacts on the environment. It is uncertain how these traditions will function when it comes to building a large facility or managing a large development.

The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Background - Mashantucket Pequot Lands and Holdings

The Mashantuckets have a very different story from the Narragansetts. While the Narragansett Indians had lost the entirety of their reservation in the late nineteenth

century, the Pequots maintained a State recognized reservation. The Pequot reservation was created in 1666 on about 2,500 acres of land. However, the impoverished Tribe sold lands for subsistence money, and the State also sold lands without the Tribe's permission. By 1856, the reservation was only 214 acres. By the mid twentieth century, Tribal numbers had dwindled, and only two sisters remained on the reservation. However, in the 1970s Tribal members began to come together and worked to organize the Tribe. In 1976, with the assistance of the Native American Rights Fund (the same group that represented the Narragansett tribe), the Pequots filed suit against the State of Connecticut and private land owners to regain their lands. As with the Narragansetts, the claims were based on the fact that the reservation lands had been sold without the express permission of the Federal government, and thus the sales were in violation of the Indian Non-Intercourse Act. In 1983 a settlement was reached, and Congress passed the Mashantucket Pequot Indian Land Claim Act. Like the Rhode Island Indian Claims Settlement Act, it provided Federal funds for the Tribe to purchase land surrounding the reservation. However, there were several very important differences. First, the Mashantuckets were granted Federal recognition by the Congress within the Act. This was very unusual, and allowed the Tribe to bypass the lengthy and expensive process of seeking recognition through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In addition, some of the lands were immediately placed into trust, and were given reservation status. All lands purchased within an area defined as the settlement area were immediately taken into trust and given reservation status; lands the Tribe purchased outside of the settlement area were to be held in fee simple by the Tribe. Another interesting and significant difference lies in the requirements for land use. While the Rhode Island Indian Claims Settlement Act required the Narragansetts to adopt a land use plan and leave the vast majority of the reservation in an undeveloped state, the Mashantucket Pequots were required to submit an economic development plan for the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. Since the original land claim settlement, the Pequot Tribe has purchased a great deal of land in the area. Tribal holdings are now approximately 5,000 acres, with approximately 1800 of that in trust.

⁷¹ Kathryn Maxwell, 5 Feb. 1997

Current Resource Use

As is clear in the requirements of the Mashantucket Pequot Land Claim Act, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe emphasized economic development from the beginning. The Tribe has engaged in a wide variety of economic activities since the 1970s. In that decade, the Tribe initiated several projects, including a community garden, a firewood business, a swine project, and a maple syrup business. However, not until after the Tribe gained Federal recognition and established their reservation did economic activity begin to expand rapidly. During the 1980s, economic ventures included a hydroponic lettuce farm and a sand and gravel quarry, which was quite successful. In 1986, the Tribe opened a high-stakes bingo hall which was also very successful. However, the major economic boon of the Pequot Tribe came after the National Indian Gaming Regulation Act (IGRA) was passed in 1988, allowing Indian tribes to offer casino-style gambling on their lands. The Pequots promptly entered into negotiations with the State of Connecticut, in accordance with IGRA, and reached an agreement which allowed the Tribe to open a gaming facility. In February 1992, the Mashantucket Pequots opened Foxwoods High Stakes Bingo and Casino, a facility of approximately 250,000 square feet. The Tribe soon made plans to expand Foxwoods; in November of 1993, they completed the expansion, putting Foxwoods at 1.3 million square feet. The facility was renamed Foxwoods Resort Casino. In August 1994, the Pequots completed another expansion which put the total size at 1.5 million feet. In October 1995, the Tribe announced plans for yet another expansion of 1.4 million square feet. Part of this expansion was completed in February of 1996 and opened to the public. As of April 1996, total development associated with the resort, including parking, was nearly 2.7 million square feet.⁷²

The Tribe is continuing to expand and change the nature of this development. They are currently excavating for another transportation facility/parking garage. In addition, they have plans to install a monorail connecting the various developments.

⁷² All figures in this paragraph taken from the Chronology published by the Mashantucket Pequots, available at the Public Relations Department

They are considering investing in a natural gas service station and natural gas vehicles for transportation from parking lots and other shuttle trips.⁷³

Although Foxwoods is the Tribe's most well-known economic venture, it has only been a beginning for the Tribe. Since the success of the casino, the Tribe has diversified its investments in many ways. In November of 1993, they opened the Two Trees Inn and the Resort Hotel, both of which are near the casino. The Tribe has also invested in or created other economic ventures, mostly off the reservation, including Pequot River Shipworks, which builds high-speed passenger ferries; the Mashantucket Pequot Pharmaceutical Network; Groton Industrial Park; Norwich Inn and Spa; and the Mystic Hilton Hotel. On the reservation there are, among other things, Tribal Offices, a health center, a community center, a fire and police station, and Tribal residences. In addition, the Tribe has announced plans to lease some of their lands to Six Flags to create a theme park. The Pequots have also opened a fish hatchery in conjunction with a new water treatment facility on the reservation. It is possible that they will be stocking lakes and ponds on the reservation with fish, as well as new water bodies created from old sand and gravel mines, and sell fishing licenses to these stocked water bodies.⁷⁴ The Tribe has commenced another major building project on their lands: the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center. This building is currently under construction.⁷⁵

The extent of the Pequot's developments have been cause for concern for many local residents and conservation groups. The casino attracts large numbers of visitors, sometimes more than 74,000 a day. Most of these visitors come in private cars, and traffic on some nearby roads has tripled and quadrupled.⁷⁶ In fact, the State of Connecticut widened Route 2, the major highway running past the casino, in order to accommodate the increased traffic. In addition to concerns about quality of life and safety for local residents, more cars mean more air pollution and toxic runoff from the roadways. As the State is already out of compliance with the Clean Air Act, the

⁷³ Mark Sceery, former EPA-Pequot Coordinator, personal interview, 25 Feb. 1997; Kevin McBride, Archaeologist, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, personal interview, 17 March 1997

⁷⁴ Mark Sceery, 25 Feb 1997

⁷⁵ on Tribal developments, see [Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation](#).

⁷⁶ both figures from Elizabeth R. Thagard, "The Menace of an Improbable Oz," [Conservation Matters - Conservation Law Foundation Magazine](#) Winter 1995-96: 8

additional cars and pollution are a serious problem.⁷⁷ The casino also disrupts the rural character of the area, with a 17 story hotel towering over the forests. It is also possible that the amount of water used for the casino and hotels may be significant enough to draw down the levels of the wetlands and swamps in the area. However, this has yet to be studied.⁷⁸

Current Resource Management

The state of environmental management by the Pequot Tribe is unclear, perhaps more so than with the Narragansetts. According to Gayle Graham, the Assistant to the Archaeologist and a tribal member, when the Tribe began to build itself up again in the 1970s, they knew that they wanted to preserve the resources on their reservations: the forests, the swamp, the water, etc. However, as she said, “We didn’t know what we were doing, we just knew we wanted to preserve everything.” Graham stated that the Pequots researched ways of protecting their cultural and environmental resources, contacting consultants and other tribes for advice.⁷⁹ However, it is not clear if any programs were actually created as a result of this research.

According to Mark Sceery, the former EPA-Pequot Coordinator, when the Tribe began to work on the casino developments, they requested that the EPA take over environmental regulation on the reservation from the state of Connecticut. He stated that the Tribe felt that the State was not in favor of the casino, and State officials were not being cooperative. The EPA agreed, and took over regulation for the Pequots. According to Sceery, this was the first time that the EPA’s Region 1 office had been asked to regulate an Indian tribe directly, and it was a difficult process. The EPA often did not move as quickly as the Tribe, which could lead to problems. For example, Sceery heard that the Pequots laid the foundations for the casino before the wetlands team could go out and assess the site for wetlands protection, although he did not confirm this information. As the Region 1 office began to learn from other EAP Regional offices, and

⁷⁷ Michael Kenyon, EPA-Pequot Coordinator, EPA Region 1, personal interview, 7 March 1997

⁷⁸ Michael Kenyon, 7 March 1997

⁷⁹ Gayle Graham, Assistant to the Archaeologist, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, personal interview, 17 March 1997

as EPA as a whole began to take a more proactive stance on Indian lands, the process has improved.⁸⁰

Due to their new wealth, the Pequots no longer take any funds from EPA for environmental programs, and do not appear to have TAS/program approval/project agreements for any environmental programs. Instead, the EPA is responsible for direct implementation. The Tribe is expected to receive TAS/program approval for the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act Clean Lakes Grant Program in 1998 and 1999, respectively.⁸¹ They do have a Department of Natural Resource Protection which was established in the last four years, although this department refused to grant an interview to discuss their activities in the arena of resource protection and management. However, according to officials at EPA, the Department of Natural Resource Protection has recently created land use rules for the Tribal lands. Michael Kenyon, the EPA-Pequot Coordinator believes that these rules set up the ability to create regulatory power, but stated that these rules have not been given to EPA for authorization or review. In addition, the Mashantuckets have been active in working to create a Tribal Environmental Policy Act (TEPA). The TEPA is theoretically similar to NEPA, except that it would be specifically for tribal lands. The reasoning behind creating a TEPA is that the NEPA process is flawed in its application to Indian lands.⁸² According to a project brief for the TEPA project, a survey conducted by the Council on Environmental Quality found that tribes felt that NEPA did not value, “the unique cultural values intrinsic to tribal health and welfare.” In addition, the tribes felt that, “federal agency implementation of the NEPA process does not result in fair treatment to Indian tribes.”⁸³ Thus, the idea behind TEPA is to create a NEPA-like process for tribal lands that will be more sensitive to tribal needs. The Mashantucket Pequots would serve as a pilot for the project. However, how this would be done and who would agree to it is unclear. In fact, jurisdiction and environmental regulation on the Pequot reservation remains fairly unclear. This confusion is exemplified by a recent question surrounding an air emission

⁸⁰ Mark Sceery, 25 Feb 1997

⁸¹ Jim Sappier, Regional Indian Program Manager, EPA Region 1, personal interview, 12 Feb. 1997; Michael Kenyon, 7 March 1997

⁸² Michael Kenyon, 7 March 1997; Jim Sappier, 12 Feb 1997

⁸³ Tribal Environmental Policy Act Project Brief, 6 Feb 1996: 1

permit. The boilers for heating Foxwoods are a point source for air pollution, and thus the Tribe needs to have a permit for them. However, it is unclear who will issue the permit: the EPA could issue it directly; the EPA could delegate to the Tribe the authority to issue the permit according to EPA permitting rules; or the Tribe could get permission to grant the permit according to their own permitting rules.

The question of environmental review for the numerous developments of the Pequot nation is another murky area. The Mashantuckets have successfully resisted performing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on any of their developments. In the case of Foxwoods, the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) was the federal agency involved. The NIGC found that there would be “no significant impact,” and did not require an EIS, although EPA strongly suggested that they should. Instead an EA was done, which is a less thorough review of the potential environmental impacts of an action. The only EIS that has been done related to Foxwoods was done for the expansion of Route 2, the highway that goes past the casino. In addition to resisting EISs, the Mashantuckets have also resisted any involvement by the State of the Connecticut. According to one EPA official, when the Pequots were first working on the casino, they would often come to EPA to find out how to build without needing permits from the State.⁸⁴ According to the Kevin McBride, archaeologist for the Tribe, the Pequots have recently adopted their own environmental review process, however he did not know the level of assessment or the details of the process.⁸⁵ The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Department of Natural Resource Preservation declined to comment.

However, the Tribe has made significant investments in protecting resources at times. For example, in the process of creating the Research Center and Museum, the environment appears to be a major concern. According to a display in Foxwoods:

The design of this building was generated by and continues to be guided by the following considerations:

- 1) The Tribal mandate to create a powerful three dimensional image that will forever represent, validate, and celebrate the history of the Mashantucket Pequot nation.
- 2) The necessity to create a structure that will respect the ecological and archaeological value of the site

⁸⁴ Mark Sceery, 25 Feb. 1997

⁸⁵ Kevin McBride, 17 March 1997

- 3) The historic dependence of the tribe on both inland agricultural and aquatic zones
- 4) The plan from the original Mystic Fort (the site of the 1637 Massacre) as a symbol of the rebirth of Mashantucket Pequot Nation

According to the Director of the Museum, the Tribe has gone to great lengths to minimize the environmental impact of the building. They have taken a “footprint approach,” trying to keep the impact of construction localized to only the site of the actual building and landscaping. This approach entails removing soil and trees for excavation with a minimal disturbance to the surrounding forest lands. In addition, they have taken great measures to ensure that the building creates a minimal disturbance in the drainage of the area; will be installing filters to reduce pollution in runoff; have made it very difficult for the public to gain access to the side of the building that faces swamps and forested areas considered as ecologically sensitive; and have left a 20 foot buffer from the wood line. The Museum will be a terminus of the planned monorail, which was rerouted along an old logging road so as to minimize its potential impact.⁸⁶

The waste water treatment facilities at Foxwoods are very high quality, and the effluents meet or exceed all federal and state standards. In addition, the Tribe has responded quickly in many cases to requests from EPA about environmental issues. For example, when the Tribe sunk new wells on part of their reservation, the EPA expressed concern that they might be affected by the nearby surface waters and thus may need a filtration system. The Tribe installed a state of the art filtration system that, in the estimation of one EPA official, nobody else has.⁸⁷

The Pequots have also taken some proactive measures to protect their environment. They have begun to map their water resources, and fence off water sources for the reservation. Their consideration of natural gas powered vehicles represents another proactive measure. In addition, the Pequots donated \$5,000 to Earth Day, USA.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Jack Campisi, Museum Director, Mashantucket Pequot Research Center and Museum, personal interview, 11 March 1997

⁸⁷ Mark Sceery, 25 Feb 1997

⁸⁸ “The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Reaching Out to the Community,” The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Department of Public Relations

Environmental management on the Mashantucket Pequot lands is thus difficult to define. The Tribe has clearly pursued a very rigorous and successful economic development plan, and has had significant impacts on the environment. Although they have resisted some aspects of regulation and management, they have also made great financial investments in other areas of environmental protection. As with the Narragansetts, there is also the question of cultural traditions. McBride commented that there are informal agreements that there are some areas that will not be disturbed, and that this informality is not a problem because the Tribe places such high priority on protecting cultural and environmental resources. However, it is once again difficult to gauge how effective these informal agreements are when it comes down to a question of development versus environment.

COMPARISON WITH THE IMAGE

All of this information paints an uneven picture of environmental protection and management on the Tribal lands in relation to the image. Not surprisingly, some aspects of the Tribes' rhetoric and actions are in synchrony with the image, and some are not. There are many differences between the two tribes, beginning with their histories. The Narragansett people have had a continuous presence in southern Rhode Island. Even though they lost their reservation in the early 1880s, the Narragansett Meeting House/Church, built in 1859, continued to serve as a cultural center for the Narragansett people. In the early part of the twentieth century, the Tribal Longhouse was built on Route 2. By the 1950s and 1960s the Tribe was beginning to actively investigate reclaiming their lands. The Lieutenant Governor remarked in a hearing at the time of the settlement, "the Narragansett Indians have a strong local identity, because there has been a consistent presence in the community. . ." ⁸⁹ The Pequot's history is very different. Ironically, although they maintained a State-recognized reservation in the area, they did not maintain the strong cultural presence that the Narragansetts had. By the 1970's, there were only two women living on the reservation, and many Pequots had moved far away

⁸⁹ Thomas Diluglio, Lt. Gov., testimony. US. Congress. Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs and House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. *On S. 3153 and H.R. 12860 to Settle Indian Land Claims within the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and for other purposes* Hearing, 20 June 1978. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1978. (*Y4.In2/11:R34): 57

from the reservation. As Graham remarked, the people left in the area were not necessarily “being cultural,” but were just trying to survive, to stay on the reservation so that it would continue to exist.⁹⁰ Because the Tribe had been so broken up, it was a struggle for them to rebuild their culture in the 1970s. This is relevant to the EcoIndian because it affects the ability to pass down cultural identities and tradition. This is particularly important because much of the EcoIndian rests on the premise that there is or was something in the cultural traditions of the people and their connection with nature that led to a more environmentally sensitive lifestyle. The concepts of tribal identity and cultural transmission are a difficult to define. There are many different ideas, and there is disagreement even among the Indian tribes themselves. In the last ten years, that have been schisms within the Narragansett Tribe, and both Tribes are currently struggling with defining Tribal membership. However, the Narragansetts’ established and continuous presence in the community provides for a stronger connection to the environment and natural resources of the area, and is therefor more congruent with the EcoIndian image.

This sense of historical connection was also apparent in the settlement process for the Narragansetts. It was important in determining which lands were deeded to the Tribe. In the Congressional hearings, Senator Chafee commented that he was, “delighted that this settlement permits [the Narragansetts] to renew their claims in certain very ancient and historic land for them.”⁹¹ However, it was not only the historical connection that made the particular settlement lands important. William G. Brody, special assistant to the Attorney General of Rhode Island said about the settlement lands:

It is a conservation area. And it is the area in its natural state in this particular location, which is of the highest and greatest value to the tribe in this particular case, not only because of its location but because of its historic value and its present natural state.⁹²

It appears from these testimonies that the lands were chosen as settlement lands because of the Narragansetts’ historical connections to the natural environment. A Tribal leader commented that:

⁹⁰ Gayle Graham, 17 March 1997

⁹¹ testimony, *On S. 3153 and H.R. 12860*. . . : 55

⁹² testimony, *On S. 3153 and H.R. 12860*. . . : 123

These lands provided [in the past,] as they do today, the cradle for our community. . . These lands have been our life source, and returning them now will insure their preservation and our survival.”⁹³

The Narragansett Tribe also agreed to a settlement which required them to keep all but 216 acres of their lands in an undeveloped state. Although it is not clear who initiated the requirement for the conservation of the settlement lands, it is important that the Narragansetts accepted such a limiting requirement. The Tribe’s attorney testified at a Congressional hearing that this requirement was, “agreeable to the Tribe.”⁹⁴ These considerations for the Tribe’s historical connection to the area and its natural setting, as the requirements for its conservation, are very much congruent with the EcoIndian.

Once again, this is very different from the Pequot’s situation. Their settlement was dependent not on a land use plan but on an economic development plan, which is not consistent with the image. According to the EcoIndian image, an Indian would take only what she or he needs, and would certainly not be interested in participating in such capitalist forms of development and accruing large profits. But this is exactly what the Mashantucket Pequots have done, and they have been oriented toward economic development from the very beginning. These two very different stories could, taken in isolation, lead to the conclusion that the Narragansetts are EcoIndians, and the Pequots are not.

However, both tribes have made efforts for environmental protection, investing the resources that they have. In the case of the Narragansetts, who have very little capital, this investment has been primarily in the form of efforts to regulate their own environment. The Narragansett Tribe has worked very hard to take over regulation from EPA and to create their own environmental protection strategy. They have created numerous environmental management plans, as described above. In fact, the Narragansetts currently have TAS/program approval/cooperative agreements for more programs under EPA than any other tribe in EPA Region 1. The Mashantuckets have invested financial resources. The Tribe has spent a great deal of money on environmental

⁹³ Eric Thomas, Tribal Secretary, testimony. *On S. 3153 and H.R. 12860* . . . : 112

⁹⁴ Thomas Tureen, testimony. *On S. 3153 and H.R. 12860* . . . : 114

protection in various forms. For example, the efforts to minimize the impact of the Research Center and Museum and the monorail have greatly added to the cost of the project.⁹⁵ The Tribe's wastewater treatment facilities and water filtration systems are state of the art, and are much more expensive and effective than they had to be to meet federal standards. The Tribe's wells for drinking water are superb; they have also installed a very expensive and high tech corrosion control system to reduce the amounts of lead and copper in the drinking water.⁹⁶ Investing in a natural gas filling station and natural gas vehicles would be another significant investment. Thus the Pequots have made quite substantial financial investments in environmental measures, and are, as stated above, working on a Tribal Environmental Policy Act.

Nevertheless, it is in direct contradiction to the EcoIndian image that Foxwoods would exist at all. Large scale economic development simply does not fit with the EcoIndian image. As one writer commented, "The crass pursuit of gambling seems a strange way for Native Americans to recapture their heritage."⁹⁷ For some, the Pequots should perhaps be labeled the Econ-Indians instead. The Narragansett's desire to engage in such developments presents the same issues. The EcoIndian image is that of Indians engaging in subsistence style, non-wasteful, low impact living. Casinos are almost exactly opposite of that idea. The desires for and actual attainment of economic growth, in a form that is so lucrative and extravagant, seems irreconcilable with the EcoIndian image.

In addition, the resistance of both tribes to thorough environmental review is not in keeping with the EcoIndian image. As an EIS is the most thorough form of environmental review available, it seems that an environmentally-oriented society would want to perform such an assessment. Both Tribes successfully resisted performing an EIS for any of their proposed or actual developments. In addition, the Mashantuckets allegedly laid the foundation for Foxwoods before the wetlands team could review the area; if this is true, they acted without outside environmental review and assessment.

⁹⁵ Jack Campisi, 11 March 1997

⁹⁶ Mark Sceery, 25 Feb. 1997

⁹⁷ Carroll Bogert, "Casino Clout for Native Americans," Newsweek 28 March 1994, US ed.: 24, online, Nexis/Lexis, 17 December 1996

Thus, for both tribes there is an internal inconsistency: while both the Narragansett and the Mashantucket Pequot tribes state that they have a strong connection to their environments and have invested substantial resources in environmental protection; they both also engage in or seek to engage in large scale development, and resist environmental review and regulation of their behavior. This seeming contradiction is related to a larger struggle over sovereignty and power between the states, the tribes, and the surrounding communities.

POLITICS, ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION, AND THE ECOINDIAN

SOVEREIGNTY AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF POWER

When asked about environmental regulation on Indian lands, the Comprehensive Planner for the Narragansetts immediately stated, “The most important thing is Tribal sovereignty.” Indian nations are considered to be “dependent sovereign nations.” This means that while they retain some of the characteristic of sovereignty, this status is dependent upon the consent of the United States Congress. Thus Congress has the right to extend or rescind the sovereign status of Indian groups. In recent years, the US government has followed a policy of “self determination” with regard to Indians. The idea behind this policy is to encourage the increased independence of Indian nations, and to build their capacity to regulate and rule over their own affairs. Many Indian nations have also been seeking to extend their own political sovereignty and assert their right to govern their own affairs. While both parties seem to be working toward the same end, it has been a difficult struggle to determine the proper balance of sovereignty, and a challenge for many tribes to take on the responsibilities of self-governance. In addition, in each situation, there is at least one other party involved: the state. While the federal government has embraced the idea of Indian autonomy, this is frustrating for many of the states in which the Indian reservations are located, because the tribes are not necessarily subject to state jurisdiction. This leads to conflicting ideas as to who should have control and jurisdiction over Indian lands, and how Indian land should be defined. Steven Silvern has described this conflict with his concepts of spatial imagination and the geography of power. Spatial imagination describes how a party conceives of the space around them, and how they imagine that space to be divided or arranged. The geography of power describes how each party perceives its jurisdiction in space, the control it considers itself as having over a certain space.⁹⁸ Each of the three players (the state, the Indian nation, and the federal government) can have a different concept of their geography of power. Thus they may seek to assert their power and control in different ways.

⁹⁸ Steven E. Silvern, “Putting Nature in Its Place: Territorial Identity and State Opposition to Ojibwe Treaty Rights,” paper presented at the American Society for Environmental History Biennial Conference. March 1997, Baltimore Maryland.

This conflict dominates interactions between the Narragansetts and the State of Rhode Island, the Mashantucket Pequots and the State of Connecticut, and the federal agencies. The environment and environmental regulation are a part of this struggle in the geography of power, and the EcoIndian image has become a tool that Indians and non-Indians have used in asserting their geography of power. When the Comprehensive Planner stated that tribal sovereignty was “the most important thing,” she was absolutely correct. Much of the action and inaction surrounding resource use and management is best understood in the context of the struggle over political and economic sovereignty.

Political Sovereignty

The push to take over environmental regulation is an extension of political sovereignty. To have sovereignty is to have, “supremacy of authority or rule,” or “complete independence and self-government.”⁹⁹ Having another agency or government regulate the environment is limiting to the sovereignty and political power of the Indian tribes. Both the Narragansetts and the Mashantuckets have worked to take over regulation of their environments. The Narragansetts have done this by creating their own zoning documents and working to take over programs from the EPA, rather than having EPA or the state of Rhode Island involved. This, of course, gives the Narragansett government more control over the settlement lands. The Mashantuckets have done this through their work on the TEPA. The goals of the TEPA project are to ensure the cooperation of federal agencies working with Indian tribes, and to, “enable tribes to conduct their own NEPA-type processes and thereby ensure their desired level of protection for tribal culture, health and welfare.”¹⁰⁰ This would give the tribes involved much more control over the regulation of the environment, and thus would increase their sovereignty.

The development of TEPA and the resistance to outside environmental review are also related to the question of sovereignty. The EPA Tribal Coordinator for the Pequots stated that his understanding was that TEPA would be very similar to NEPA in its

⁹⁹ The American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition. Version 3.0A. Houghton Mifflin American Heritage Electronic Dictionary, 1992.

¹⁰⁰ Tribal Environmental Policy Act Project Brief, 6 Feb 1996: 1

requirements for environmental review, but would not allow for the high degree of public involvement that NEPA does. He commented that, in fact, the Pequots' resistance to performing an EIS seems to be focused most strongly around the role of public participation. This is perfectly understandable when considered as an assertion of political sovereignty. The high level of public comment and review in the EIS process allows non-tribal members to have a strong voice in the regulation and use of what the Narragansetts and Pequots consider to be their lands and resources. The spatial imagination of the Tribe involves the reservation, trust, and fee simple lands being entirely under their control. That is their geography of power. To allow the high level of public involvement that comes in an EIS is an intrusion into that space.

It is also interesting to note that both tribes maintain a certain degree of guardedness or secrecy over their environmental management. Both the Environmental Specialists at the Narragansett Department of Natural Resources felt the need to ask permission of the Tribal Council before speaking about Narragansett resource management. The employees of the Mashantucket Pequot Department of Natural Resource Preservation would not speak about their activities without permission from their supervisor and the Department of Public Relations. This permission was not granted after three months of contact. The documents and programs prepared for either tribe are not on the public record and are not made available to the general public without permission. For both tribes, the reasons given are that environmental issues and regulations are politically quite sensitive, and so the employees do not want to risk giving out information without permission. This indicates the highly politicized nature of environmental regulation and sovereignty.

Economic Sovereignty

In addition to working for political sovereignty, the Mashantuckets and Narragansetts have striven for economic sovereignty and self sufficiency. The stated goals of the Narragansetts are to provide for the safety, health, and welfare of the current and future Tribal members. Part of attaining this goal is economic - having the economic ability to care for their members. While they have repeatedly stated their commitment to protecting their natural resources as a part of providing for the future, they also see the

need to be able to provide for themselves economically and become independent from the federal handouts that support them today. The Mashantucket Pequots have similarly stated goals. They have clearly been able to achieve economic independence; their success with Foxwoods and other ventures has allowed the Tribe to offer free education and health care to all its members, and every member is assured of a job in the Tribal enterprises. The Pequots have a great interest in continuing this growth and diversifying their economy so as not to remain dependent on gambling.

Having control over environmental regulation contributes to economic sovereignty. Because economic growth and environmental protection do not often go hand in hand, particularly for tribes who lack capital, environmental regulations can and have been used by outside communities to attempt to stop economic development on Indian lands. Regulating their own environment allows the tribes to make decisions for themselves about the balance of environmental protection and economic development.

All of this is not to say that the Narragansett Tribe or the Mashantucket Pequots do not have a strong commitment to environmental protection. It is rather to point out that there is also a motivation to increase their political and economic sovereignty by seeking to regulate their own environments and exclude the regulation and comment of others.

The Conflict

The states and the communities surrounding the Mashantucket and Narragansett lands, however, also see the Indian lands as being a part of their geography of power. The fact that particular pieces of land are under Indian control does not necessarily remove them from the non-Indian communities' spatial imagination. These people still feel a connection to and an investment in the area as a whole, which includes the Indians' lands. Thus, for these people it is the ultimate frustration not to have access to information regarding the regulation of these lands or have a say in how these lands are developed. For the people in the surrounding communities, allowing the Narragansetts and Pequots to control environmental regulation interferes with their geography of power by taking land in their area out of their control. In particular, the ability of the tribes to

build without going through an EIS process denies them their right to have input in what happens in what they consider “their areas.”

This difference in opinion and spatial imagination is at the heart of the conflict over environmental regulation. The different conceptions of the Indians and the surrounding communities are captured perfectly in comments made by representatives of both sides about the various disputes over developments on Pequot lands. For a Mashantucket spokeswoman, it is about, “the little stereotype of the Indian in the woods...That’s where white society has tried to keep the Indians. We’re not supposed to have power and do business.”¹⁰¹ For the president of the North Stonington Land Alliance and founding member of the No Annexation Not One Acre citizen’s group (created to keep the Pequots from putting more land in trust, thus taking it out of local control), it’s about, “a loss of the democratic process.”¹⁰²

The Role of the EcoIndian

The image of the EcoIndian has played an important role in all of this. As the Narragansetts and Mashantuckets have asserted their right to regulate their own environments, they have used the EcoIndian image to justify that assertion. The Tribes have essentially stated that they are the natural stewards of the environment, so they should be left to regulate that environment without interference. This image has been embraced and used by both Tribes to support their assertion of political power and create their geography of power. The image has also been used by the non-Indian public to try to limit the assertions of sovereignty and to extend their own power. The people living in areas surrounding the two reservations who are opposed to the developments have also relied on the EcoIndian image. It is possible that they have held the Indian Tribes to a higher standard of environmental sensitivity in order to enforce the EcoIndian image. They have also expressed sentiments that the Narragansetts and the Pequots are not “real Indians,” and should not be allowed to have these developments on their lands. For these people, the EcoIndian serves to reinforce their arguments by providing an idea of how Indians are supposed to act. To understand more fully the conflict over sovereignty,

¹⁰¹ Terry Bell, quoted in Bogert, p24

¹⁰² Madeline Jeffery, quoted in Charles

the environment, and the role of the image, it is best to examine a particular scenario where it has been involved.

CASE STUDY: THE NARRAGANSETT CASINO

The conflict over spatial imagination, sovereignty, and the use of the image is exemplified in the recent controversy over the proposed Narragansett casino. This conflict demonstrates how the different groups imagine their geography of power, how the environment and environmental regulation has become a part of that, and how the EcoIndian image has been used by both sides to reach their goals.

Background

In January of 1992, the Narragansett Tribe requested that the State of Rhode Island enter into negotiations for a class three gaming facility on Narragansett lands.¹⁰³ The State of Rhode Island declined and instead filed suit against the Narragansetts asking for declaratory and injunctive relief from the application of IGRA to the Narragansett lands. The State claimed that IGRA did not apply to the Narragansetts for two related reasons: first, the Settlement Act stated explicitly that the settlement lands were under state jurisdiction, and under State law gambling expansion is only allowed with voter approval; second, Congress had never intended for IGRA to apply to the Narragansett settlement lands. This second claim was based on the fact that there was initially a section in the text of the law stating that the Narragansett lands would not be considered Indian Lands for the purposes of gaming, and thus would be exempt from IGRA. However, that text was removed before IGRA was passed. In the final ruling, the court found that under the Settlement Act, the State of Rhode Island did indeed have civil regulatory jurisdiction over the settlement lands. However, the State did not have exclusive jurisdiction; the Tribe also held concurrent jurisdiction over their lands. In

¹⁰³ Under IGRA, passed in 1988, there are three classes of gaming. The first is traditional gaming, which is unregulated. The second class includes bingo and related games. This class is regulated by the tribe and the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC). The third class includes all other types of games, including casino-style games. Class three gaming is permitted under approved compacts between the state and the Indian tribe. Under IGRA, the state is required to allow any class three games already allowed in the state; state regulations such as betting limits do not apply, but that can be negotiated for. Either a tribal

addition, IGRA had implicitly repealed the State's jurisdiction in the area of gaming regulation. Therefore, the Tribe did have the right to open a gaming facility on their lands. The court ordered Rhode Island to enter into negotiations in good faith with the Narragansetts.¹⁰⁴ Governor Sundlun negotiated with the Tribe and came to an agreement with them. The Tribe agreed to seek voter approval on a referendum to open a gaming facility on a property in West Greenwich. If they did not get voter approval, they would then move to open a gaming facility on the settlement lands in Charlestown. The referendum for the facility in West Greenwich was not approved. The Tribe then announced plans to open a facility on their lands in Charlestown, near the intersection of Route 2 and Route 112. This proposal met with strenuous objection from the Town of Charlestown. The Tribe continued with their plans, but were forced to scale down to a high-stakes bingo parlor because the state would no longer agree to a compact for a class three gaming facility. However, in October of 1996, Senator Chafee attached a rider to an appropriations bill which stated that the Narragansett lands would not be considered as Indian lands for gaming or any other purposes. This bill was passed into law that month. The Narragansetts have stated that they are looking into possible legal actions to overturn that bill. However, for the time being, they will not be able to open a gaming facility on their lands without going through the voter approval process. This ordeal sparked a great deal of public controversy in the State of Rhode Island and in neighboring areas in Connecticut. The reactions of the people in the Charlestown to the proposed facilities, the Narragansetts' responses to the public reaction, and the rhetoric used by all parties are particularly telling about the politics of environmental regulation and the role of the EcoIndian.

Environmental Issues

Outside of stated moral concerns about gambling, one of the primary arguments against the proposed casino was environmental. Opponents to the facility claimed that the proposed casino would damage the pristine environment of the South County. The

official or a state official may initiate negotiations; if a tribe makes such a request the state is required to negotiate in good faith.

¹⁰⁴ *State of Rhode Island v. Narragansett Indian Tribe*; 19 F.3d 685

Town Planner for Charlestown prepared a document in August of 1993 entitled, "Overview of Initial Concerns and Potential Negative Impacts of the Indian Gaming Facility." Because the Narragansett Tribe did not release specific plans, except to say that the facility would be approximately 110,000 square feet and would be near the intersection of Routes 2 and 112, most of the concerns were expressed in general terms. In the section on environmental concerns, the document lists threats to groundwater and recharge areas, wetlands, and rare plants and animals; concerns about wastewater treatment; and the fact that the development would be in a 100 year floodplain. Other associated environmental concerns included increases in traffic flows and the possible cumulative effects of associated developments. Many other people in Charlestown and surrounding areas in South County expressed similar concerns about the environmental effects of the proposal. Several citizen's groups were formed, such as Rhode Islanders Against a Gambling Environment, Rhode Island Coalition Against Casino Gambling, and The Alliance to Save South County (ASSC). These groups have been active in writing letters to government officials and preparing a number of mini-publications discussing the issue. In addition, the Charlestown Conservation Commission and Town Council have been actively involved in this issue, citing similar concerns, as have State Senators and Representatives. Senators Chafee and Pell wrote to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt in December of 1994, "We are deeply concerned about the enormous environmental effects that the construction of a casino would have on the Tribe's settlement lands and on the entire state." The concerns of these parties were shared by the EPA. The EPA voiced opinion that NIGC should require an EIS for the proposed facility, in letters to the NIGC, press releases, and letters to the Charlestown Town Council. In his letter to the Town Council, EPA's Regional Administrator stated, "EPA believes it is likely that the nature and magnitude of the project's potential impacts to air quality and aquatic resources, and secondary impacts from ancillary development, indicate that an EIS is warranted."

In addition to concerns about threats to natural resources such as water quality and rare plants and wildlife, there has been a more general concern expressed about the destruction of the rural character of South County. In March of 1994, Representative

Ronald K. Machtley wrote to the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs concerning the Narragansetts' proposal:

[O]ur concerns in Rhode Island involve far more than legal and judicial issues. The cultural heritage and natural beauty of the region proposed for this casino is gravely threatened...Indeed, the Narragansett tribal lands are an important conservation area that provides a habitat for rare animals and plants as well as drinking water and flood control.

In this letter, Representative Machtley is stating his concern not only for the specific environmental threats, but also for the more general idea of the "natural beauty of the area." These concerns have been echoed by many residents of South County. In July 1994, a member of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Casino Gambling testified before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. In her testimony, she stated:

I assume you have never been to Rhode Island so I ask you to visualize some place of incomparable natural beauty in your home state- a place that city people escape to for much needed regeneration, a place where generations of parents have taken their children on holiday, a place where small businesses pass from one family member to the next. In Rhode Island, that place is called South County. The most fragile of South County's towns, Charlestown, is the proposed casino site. Most of the state's important conservation areas are in Charlestown. . .The wildlife that inhabit the conservation areas and the ecosystems of these area depend on the rural use patterns.¹⁰⁵

In this statement, the resident is clearly appealing not only to concerns about specific environmental threats but to concerns about the general character of the area. Publications from the ASSC repeatedly mention such concerns. In an interview, members of the Charlestown Conservation Commission expressed concerns about the rural character of South County, and stated that the proposal of the Narragansetts was out of proportion with the rest of the county. For the people of South County, Foxwoods provides adequate evidence of what sort of problems a gaming facility on the Narragansett lands would create - large increases in traffic, problems with air pollution and toxic runoff, and a disruption of the rural character of the area. Foxwoods, with its brightly colored, well lit tower hotels and wide expanses of parking lots, is used as the

¹⁰⁵ "Testimony July 19, 1994 Paula E. Lynch Rhode Island Coalition Against Casino Gambling Senate Indian Affairs Indian Gambling," 19 July 1994, [Federal Document Clearing House, Inc. Congressional Testimony](#), online, Nexis/Lexis, 16 December 1996

case example of what groups like the ASSC and the Conservation Commission are trying to avoid.

The Conflict

Those voicing concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed casino have rallied around two calls: one to stop the development altogether, and, barring that, to at least require an EIS for the proposal. Clifford Vanover, the Vice-Chair of the Charlestown Conservation Commission stated, “that if we had to have this, then we should have a full study done. We should know what the impacts are going to be...if we have to live with this, if we couldn’t stop it, then shouldn’t we be protected? Shouldn’t we get the maximum protection?”¹⁰⁶

Much of the opponents’ frustration was focused around the idea that the Narragansetts were getting special treatment because they are federally recognized Indians. Two themes that underlie their arguments over the environment were public involvement and equality. In terms of public involvement, opponents were concerned that the Narragansetts were able to push this proposal through without input or comment from the surrounding communities. They were not required to gain voter approval, as other private developers would have been, because the facility would have been on Indian lands, and thus outside of the State’s jurisdiction on gambling. The Narragansetts were also not required to perform an EIS. This further removed the public, as an EIS would have required public review and comment and the EA did not. Vanover remarked, “If an EIS is done...they try to determine the scope of the site and right away local governments, local groups would become involved. We would have input. As it was, we had no input.”¹⁰⁷ Members of the Conservation Commission also expressed dissatisfaction at the low amount of input that they were given by the Narragansetts, and the fact that they never saw the completed EA documents. Vanover remarked, “it’s not about gaming, necessarily, it’s about due process.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Clifford Vanover, Vice-Chair Charlestown Conservation Commission, personal interview, 18 Feb. 1997

¹⁰⁷ Clifford Vanover, 18 Feb. 1997

¹⁰⁸ Clifford Vanover, 18 Feb. 1997

The fact that the Narragansetts were not required to go through either process to involve public opinion led to concerns about equality. Those concerned about the impact of the development voiced opinions that the Narragansetts should have to go through the same processes as anyone else would. Gordon Foer, the Chair of the Conservation Commission stated:

I think it's a matter of what process also. For any proposal shouldn't they be required to go through the same steps and hoops and follow the same laws that any other development does, that we do? It really destroys the democratic process to allow them to do it without jumping through the same hoops.¹⁰⁹

Opponents felt the Narragansetts were being allowed to open a casino without voter approval because they are unlike any private entity, but were not necessarily required to do an EIS as a federal entity would have been, and were thus getting special treatment.

The Narragansetts, however, felt that these calls for an EIS amounted to discrimination against the Tribe. No other Indian tribe has ever been required to perform an EIS for a gambling facility, and the Narragansetts stated that it was unfair to single them out in this way. They actively refused not only to perform an EIS, but also to release specific plans for the site, and to meet with Charlestown Town Council. The Narragansetts strongly asserted their right to govern their land use as they saw fit, and avoided input from the surrounding communities.

Power and the EcoIndian

The arguments above are essentially arguments about sovereignty and the geography of power; they are disputes about who should have control over land use and the proposed development and what process should govern it. The debate surrounding the proposal is different from debates over other developments in South County because the Narragansetts are a federally recognized Indian tribe. Their status as a dependent sovereign nation with concurrent jurisdiction conflicts with Charlestown's spatial imagination and geography of power. There is thus a basic power struggle over the right to control land use and development in South County. The environmental concerns of the local residents – increased traffic, associated developments, disturbance of the rural

character of the area, damage to flora and fauna – have become a part of that more basic struggle over sovereignty. The idea of the EcoIndian has been a part of that debate. It has helped shape the conflict over sovereignty and land use, as both sides have been affected by or have used the idea of the EcoIndian in their arguments.

One way that the EcoIndian may shape this debate is by creating a higher standard of environmental sensitivity for the Narragansetts because they are Indians. There is some evidence that there may be a different standard for the Indians than for any other group proposing such a development. There is already a great deal of gambling in Rhode Island. As the Narragansetts are quick to point out, the State capitalizes on gaming at Newport Jai Alai Fronton and at the Lincoln Greyhound Park racing track, and profits from these lottery games. The government of Rhode Island gets a substantial portion of its infrastructure budget from gaming revenues. Thus, the Narragansetts contend, the state is extremely hypocritical and discriminatory to not allow gaming for the Narragansetts.¹¹⁰ However, this argument is weakened by the fact that the year the Narragansett casino in West Greenwich was on the ballot, there were several other casino proposals which also failed.

Another area of evidence involves the environmental arguments of those opposed to the gaming facility. While opponents to the proposed facility repeatedly state that the settlement lands are a vitally important conservation area and that the whole area is defined by its rural character, zoning maps tell a different story. Current zoning in Charlestown, created in 1984, has the area directly to the north and contiguous to the settlement lands zoned as Industrial and Industrial Research and Development. The area has a history of industrial development, including the United Nuclear Facility, Kenyon Mills, and the chemical and dye factories mentioned above that threaten the Tribe's water quality. The area around the intersection of Route 2 and 112 is zoned as "general business." Areas contiguous to the settlement lands are zoned as three and two acre residential, while the settlement lands are all zoned as five acre residential. This is interesting for several reasons. First, it is doubtful that Charlestown had any jurisdiction

¹⁰⁹ Gordon Foer, Chair Charlestown Conservation Commission, personal interview, 18 Feb. 1997

¹¹⁰ Randy Noka, First Councilman, Narragansett Indian Tribe, speech at the "Massacre Revisited" protest, 16 November 1997; "Senator Chafee and Governor Almond Violated Our Rights," leaflet distributed by the Narragansett Indian Tribe

to zone the settlement lands, and it is telling that rather than labeling them as settlement lands or leaving them un-zoned, they chose to zone each piece as five acre residential. Second, the settlement lands are zoned for less dense land use than the surrounding areas, suggesting a double standard. In addition, it is interesting to note that in 1974, when the previous zoning map was created, the entire area was zoned as one and two acre residential. Three and five acre residential zoning had not even been created at that time. Thus the standards for the area have changed since the reservation was created, and it does seem that at least in terms of zoning, the settlement lands have been treated inconsistently with the areas directly surrounding them.

However, this evidence, while interesting to consider, cannot be entirely relied upon. The Town Planning Office, as well as the Charlestown Conservation Commission, have expressed concerns that the current zoning allows for too much sprawling development and dense land use. In addition, the changes in zoning may be reflective of the changing values of the community that apply to the area as a whole, not just to the settlement lands. While evidence for a higher standard of environmental consciousness is inconclusive, there does seem to be some sentiment that building this casino is not something Indians should do. As Foer commented, “it sounds so hypocritical...the Narragansetts talk about as a people who we are and where we come from and how much we respect the environment, and I don’t know, a lot of it seems hypocritical to me.”¹¹¹

In a different but closely related vein, there are sentiments in the community that the Narragansetts are not really Indians, and do not deserve their special status as a sovereign nation. Kathryn Maxwell and Gordon Foer both stated that many of the people in the area do not feel that the Narragansetts are real Indians. While the Narragansetts have had a continuous cultural tradition in the area, many seem to feel that they have, for all intents and purposes, been assimilated into mainstream society. These sentiments may have to do with the fact that the Narragansetts do not live in an isolated setting on a reservation – they went to school with everyone else, and many grew up in the neighborhoods surrounding Charlestown. In addition, there may be racial issues, such as the fact that there is a large amount of African-American ancestry among the Narragansetts. For whatever reason people may feel the Narragansetts are not real

Indians, the image of the EcoIndian serves to back up their claim. For these people, the EcoIndian provides an image of how Indians *should* be, how the Narragansetts would act if they were real Indians. The EcoIndian gives Americans an idea of what the “real Indians” are like, and it is an idea that is deeply embedded in the American mind. As discussed above, it is the image of the Indian in nature, the idealized natural man. It is of the Indian in Plains dress, in a natural setting, with a lifestyle very different from that of non-Indians. It is of Indians from long ago in a different world. This image is very much a part of the American consciousness, a part of Americans’ ideas of themselves. However, very few eastern tribes fit this image - most of these tribes are small, have small reservations, and make their livings in ways that are quite similar to those non-Indians around them. They do not dress in buckskin clothes and live in teepees. Those opposed to the gaming facility have used this image to support their feeling that the Narragansetts are not real Indians; thus challenging their sovereignty as an Indian nation. It is particularly telling that to stop the gaming facility, Senator Chafee used language declaring that the Narragansett lands were not to be considered as Indian lands for the purposes of IGRA.

For their part, the Narragansetts have used the same images and ideas for their own purposes. Their responses, or lack of response, to the concerns voiced by the Charlestown Conservation Commission, the Town Council, and the Planning Department are a part of the Tribe’s assertion of sovereignty described above. The tribe has actively refused to perform an EIS, has refused to meet with the Charlestown Town Council, has not released specific plans for the casino for public comment, and does not have any of its environmental regulations as part of the public record. They have established their right to sovereignty through the environmental regulation and review processes, and have taken a very strong stance. In commercials and documents such as those quoted in sections above, the Tribe has used the EcoIndian image to justify this expansion of sovereignty through environmental regulations. In stating that they are the original stewards of these lands and thus should be better capable of regulating it than anyone else, they are using the EcoIndian image to justify and explain their own sovereignty.

¹¹¹ Gordon Foer, 18 Feb. 1997

The EcoIndian image has been used both ways. It has encouraged the idea that Indians should be more environmentally aware in their land use and development patterns. It has been used to show that the Narragansetts are not really Indians and thus should not have the rights of a sovereign. It has also been used by the Narragansetts to show that they are the people responsible for the land, and that they should have the right to govern it as they please. The issue of environmental regulation is a part of the larger issue of sovereignty and geography of power; the EcoIndian image has been used as a tool by both sides to justify asserting control and jurisdiction.

CONCLUSIONS

The image of the EcoIndian is one that permeates American culture. It is found in media from television and movies to songs, mass produced art, and popular literature. There has been a long tradition of using images of Indians to define what it means to be European or Euro-American; definitions of Indians and nature have been closely linked and intertwined with definitions of Euro-Americans and civilization. For that reason, the EcoIndian is very much a part of the American consciousness.

While the image plays an important role in defining American society, when it comes to dealing with the needs and aspirations of Indians of today, the image takes on different meanings. In the case of the Narragansetts and the Mashantucket Pequots the image has been used by both the Tribes and the communities surrounding them in political battles over sovereignty and control.

This usage raises questions as to the worth and validity of the EcoIndian image. While many Indian leaders have embraced the image and promoted it as a means of raising themselves and their cultures out of the negative stereotypes that have plagued them for centuries, it seems that this image comes with as many limits as any other. As much as this image might be labeled as a “positive stereotype,” it is still a stereotype, and its accuracy is questionable. Many scholars have raised questions as to whether the impact of the Indian nations was so light after all, looking at evidence of burning and massive buffalo kills. More importantly, trying to classify the Indians attitudes and actions, societal structures and cultural values as conservationist or ecological in nature is a simplification and a distortion. Indian world views and cultures cannot be superimposed into Euro-American categories or thought patterns. American Indian attitudes toward nature were fundamentally different from our own, often involving social relationships with and between other species. As Richard White points out, “We distort Indian reality when we say Indians were conservationists - that’s not what conservation means. We don’t give them full credit for their view, and so we falsify history.”¹¹² In addition, White and William Cronon argue that claiming Indians “lived

¹¹² William Cronon and Richard White, “Indians in the Land,” *American Heritage*, 37 (1986) 21. See also Krech, “Ecology and the American Indian.”

lightly on the land,” becoming a part of the harmony of nature and leaving no traces behind, deprives Indians of culture. Culture is intimately tied with how people interact with and alter their environments; culture is in part what separates humans from the rest of the world. Saying Indians did not alter or affect their environment denies their culture and their history.¹¹³

In addition to being an historically inaccurate image, the EcoIndian also does a poor job of accounting for current realities of Indian nations. As in the case of the Narragansetts and the Mashantuckets, there are issues that the EcoIndian image simply cannot address. While both of these tribes profess a strong attachment to the earth and a conviction to protect the environment, both tribes also face many challenges in today’s world. The Narragansett Tribe faces problems of poverty and high unemployment. They lack resources to become financially independent and remain largely dependent on federal handouts. Before the Mashantucket Pequots built their bingo hall and casino, they faced many of the same problems. As these nations struggle to define themselves and support themselves as sovereign nations, they confront obstacles that cannot be answered or reconciled with a simplistic image of life 500 years ago. And yet this is the image of Indians that is portrayed so prominently in American culture.

This raises larger questions as to how indigenous societies are to be defined and treated in general. Recently a great deal of attention has been given to the plight of indigenous societies. There are institutions and centers for the preservation and protection of indigenous knowledge and life styles, and there are newsgroups and websites dedicated to the same purpose. International treaties have stated the importance of protecting the rights of indigenous societies. However, the questions of how to define indigenous societies, which rights are to be protected and for whom have not been addressed. In the case of the proposed casino, the Narragansetts’ rights to sovereignty were compromised through the use of, and perhaps in part because of, the EcoIndian image. Non-Indians questioned the true Indian-ness of the Narragansetts as they made proposals that did not match that image, and eventually stifled that proposal. This example raises the issue of whether we are willing to protect indigenous people as they

¹¹³ See Cronon and White (1986) and Richard White and William Cronon, “Ecological Change and Indian-White Relations,” History of Indian-White Relations (Washington DC : Smithsonian Institute, 1988) 417-429

may change and aspire to material wealth and more conventional lifestyles, or only as they match the images that we have created for them.

The use of the EcoIndian as a political tool by Indians and non-Indians alike is troubling for all of these reasons, and is likely not beneficial for Indians or for environmental protection. The EcoIndian is a myth, and mythology has its place. That place however, should not be in the battles over sovereignty and resource use.

APPENDIX

Guide to Illustrations

1. *The Discovery of America*. Jan van der Straet (Stradanus), pen and bistre, ca. 1575. This drawing depicts the Europeans discovering America. The Europeans are represented by the explorers with several symbols of civilization; America is represented by the naked Indian maiden and the wild flora and fauna surrounding her.
2. *The Death of Jane McCrea*. John Vanderlyn, oil on canvas, 1804. This painting epitomizes Ignoble Savagery: the Indians are violent and cruel as they attack the hapless white woman
3. *Last of Their Race*. John M. Stanley, oil on canvas, 1857. In this painting, Stanley displays his fear that the Noble Savages of America were being pushed to destruction by the forces of civilization.
4. *Sitting Bull (Tatanka Yotanka)*. David F. Barry, albumen print, 1885. Perhaps one of the most famous American Indians, Sitting Bull is pictured here looking wise and stoical.
5. *Crying to the Spirits*. Edward Curtis, photograph. The Indian in this photograph also looks noble and wise; the title adds an element of spirituality or mysticism to the picture.
6. *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*. Albert Bierstadt, oil on canvas, 1863. Bierstadt's painting places the Indians in harmonious and grand natural scene
7. *Last of the Buffalo*. Albert Bierstadt, oil on canvas, ca. 1888. Bierstadt depicts the Indians as skilled hunters, and presents the issue of the near-demise of the buffalo.
8. *Watcher of the Plains*. Charles M. Russel, sculpture in bronze, ca. 1902. The sculpted Indian looks wise and knowing, and the title implies a connection to and knowledge of the natural world.
9. *Earth Knower*. Maynard Dixon, oil on canvas, ca. 1931-1935. Once again, the title of the painting states a strong connection between the earth and the noble Indian.
10. *Pollution: It's a Crying Shame*. Poster for Keep America Beautiful, Inc., by Marsteller, Inc. This poster, along with the television commercials, made the image of Iron Eyes Cody famous.
11. Wooden Plaque, made for SCAFA-Tornabene Art Publishing Co.
12. Poster by Bob Quick, made for Leanin' Tree Inc.

(NOTE: ILLUSTRATIONS ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN THE ELECTRONIC VERSION)

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Gayle Graham, Assistant to the Archaeologist, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. 3/17/97

Micheal Kenyon, EPA-Pequot Coordinator, EPA Region 1. 3/7/97

Eleanor Kwong, EPA-Narragansett Coordinator, EPA Region 1. 2/12/97

Kathryn Maxwell, Environmental Specialist/Comprehensive Planner, Narragansett Indian Tribe Department of Natural Resources. 12/10/96; 2/5/97

Kevin McBride, Archaeologist, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. 3/17/97

James Sappier, Regional Indian Program Manager, EPA Region 1. 2/12/97

Mark Sceery, EPA-Mohegan Coordinator, former EPA-Pequot Coordinator, EPA Region 1. 2/25/97

Dinalyn Spears, Environmental Specialist/Biologist, Narragansett Indian Tribe Department of Natural Resources; 2/28/97

Clifford Vanover, vice-chair, Charlestown Conservation Commission. 2/18/97