

Tuesday, December 20, 2016

NATIVE AMERICANS Historic pact reached in Dennis

Agreement gives tribes access to conservation land

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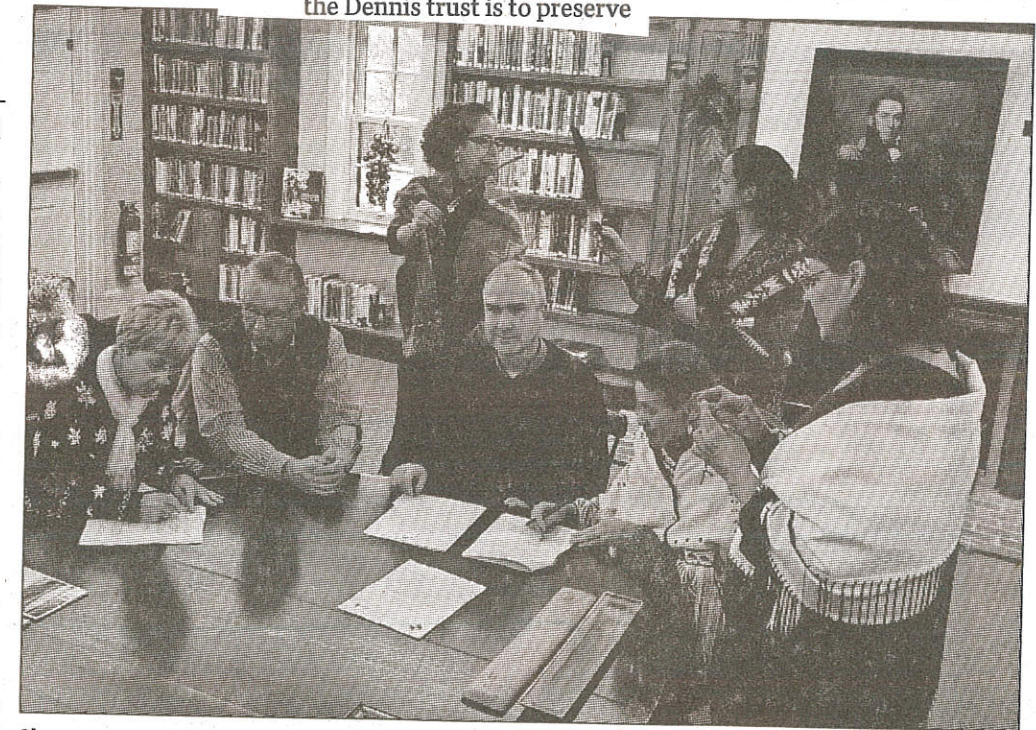
its kind east of the Mississippi River.

The agreement "is very important and it's very historically significant," said Ramona Peters, founder and president of the Native Land Conservancy. "It's the first time since the Pilgrims landed on Cape Cod we've been welcomed back to land we've been separated from."

No money was exchanged as part of the five-year access contract, which will be recorded in the Barnstable County Registry of Deeds. Peters, a Mashpee Wampanoag elder, presented the Dennis trust with five wampum beads, an act she said was equivalent to a European-style paper contract.

The compact calls for the documentation and preservation of native cultural values and education about those cultural assets to both native and non-native peoples. This can include sites marked by stone piles or sticks, for example, that were places where stories were told by native people. Peters' group will work to renew those markers, she said.

The Native Land Conservancy will host an annual presentation about the land



Sharman Brown, left, a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and Love Richardson-Williams, right, of the Nipmuc nation, use eagle feathers as part of a ceremony at the signing of a land agreement between the Native Land Conservancy and the Dennis Conservation Trust on Monday in Barnstable. CHRIS LINDAHL/CAPE COD TIMES

and how it was used, with the public invited to attend.

Mark H. Robinson, executive director of the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, lauded the agreement and said he hoped it would prove to be a local example of something that's been done most widely in California. The estuary, with its fish, shellfish and grasses important to groups native to the

BARNSTABLE — Native Americans will once again be free to gather, celebrate and hold spiritual ceremonies on 250 acres of Dennis conservation land following the ratification of a historic pact Monday.

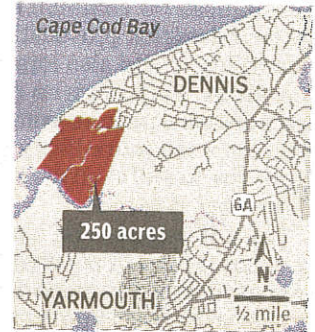
The agreement between the Dennis Conservation Trust and the Native Land Conservancy provides native peoples formal access to a marsh and dunes along Chase Garden Creek for cultural activities. The estuary and beach were a place for gathering and foraging by people indigenous to Cape Cod, including the Wampanoag. It is now owned by the Dennis Conservation Trust.

The Native Land Conservancy seeks to preserve the natural and cultural resources important to people indigenous to Massachusetts. The aim of the Dennis trust is to preserve

open space in that town. About 20 people gathered at the Sturgis Library in Barnstable on Monday afternoon for an intimate celebration of what is described by the two nonprofit groups as the first agreement of

Land agreement

The Native Land Conservancy, Inc., signed a Cultural Respect Agreement on Monday providing the group with access to 250 acres of land in Dennis.



Source: maps4news.com/@HERE

Cape, is a great place to start in Massachusetts.

"It's a perfect place to start this cooperation, this collaboration," he said.

As part of the ceremony, two women waved eagle feathers gently through the air and around each person in the room. Peters said the feathers are significant because of how high eagles fly, representing a higher knowledge that was

tapped into by the Dennis group in making the land-access agreement.

And to celebrate the occasion, Dennis Conservation Trust Director Katherine Garofoli gave Peters a framed weaving of native plants by Dennis Port artist Shannon Goheen.

— Follow Chris Lindahl on Twitter: @cmlindahl.