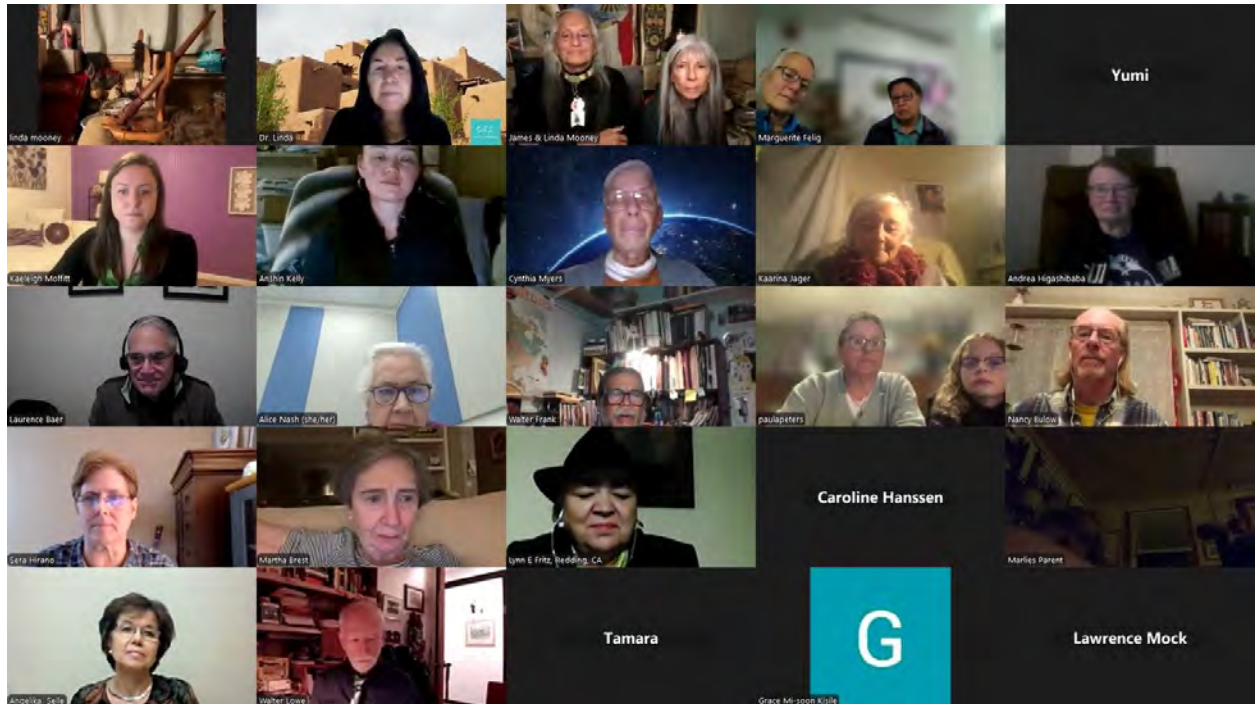
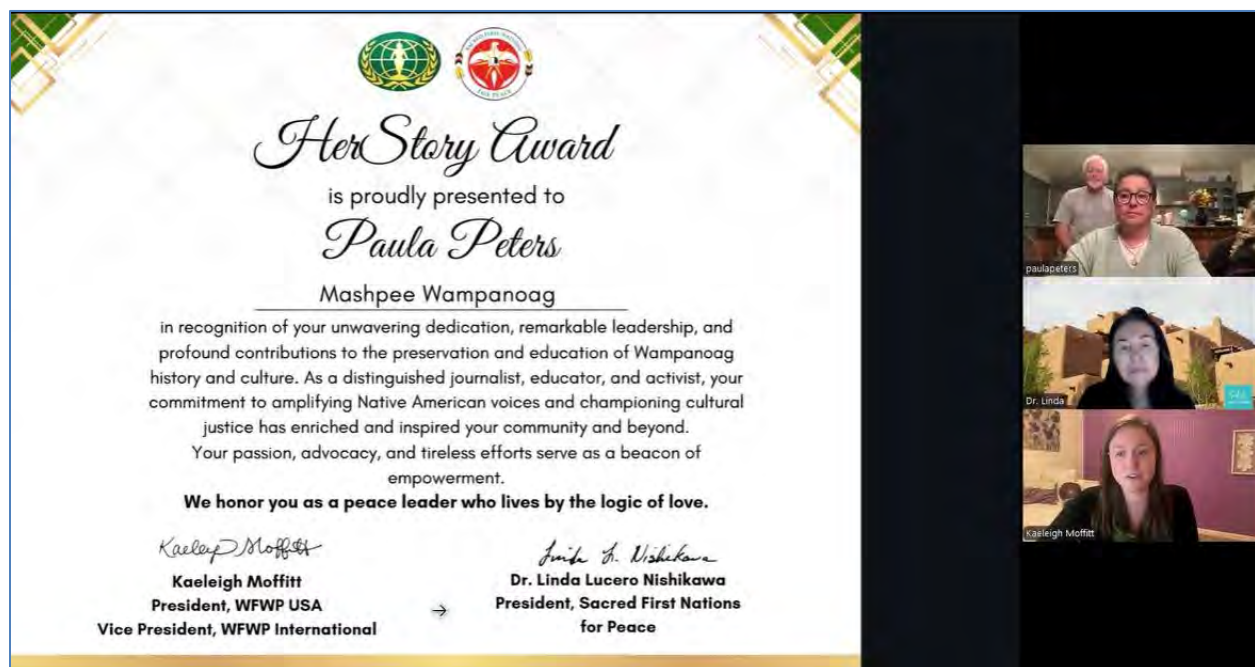


WFWP USA Native American Heritage Month: Wampanoag Women Leaders

Linda Lucero Nishikawa, Kaeleigh Moffitt, Yumi Willett
November 25, 2024



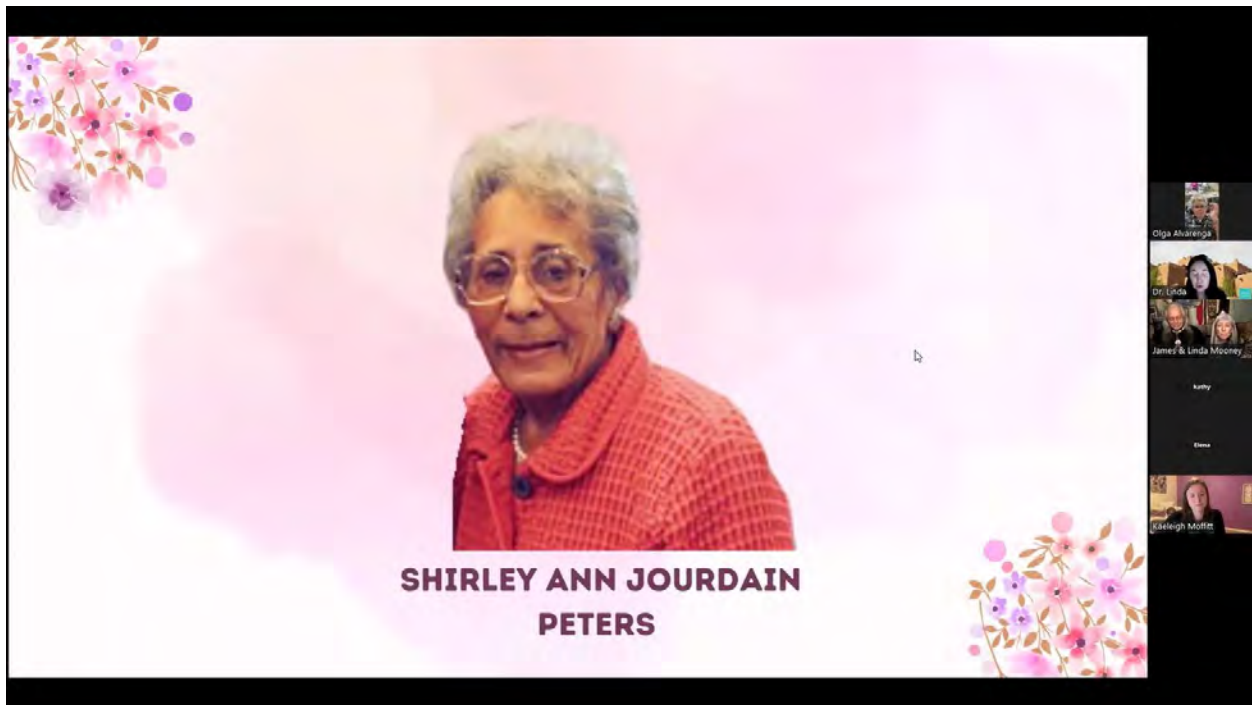
On November 25, 2024, Sacred First Nations for Peace, (SFNP) hosted their monthly gathering in collaboration with the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), celebrating National Native American Heritage Month. The event was a profound tribute to Indigenous culture and heritage, honoring the leadership and legacy of Wampanoag women. In Native American Nations maternal guidance, management, leadership, and direction is held in the highest regard. For thousands of years, the first women leaders of the United States of America were American Indian women. One of the current 574 federally recognized Native American Nations, the Wampanoag Tribe has been here for thousands of years and still remains strong in their ancestral homelands. It is in fitting tribute, this month, that SFNP and WFWP nominate and honor the Wampanoag women’s leadership with the Herstory Award.



Dr. Linda Lucero Nishikawa, Pueblo, Hunka Lakota, President of Sacred First Nations for Peace, graciously welcomed attendees and introduced the program. The event began and concluded with expressions of gratitude through sacred Peace Pipe prayers led by James and Linda Mooney of the Seminole, Oklevueha Native American Church. Dr. Angelika Selle, National Advisor of WFWP, also offered a representative prayer, adding a spirit of unity and reflection.

Following Dr. Selle's prayer, WFWP President Kaeleigh Moffitt took the stage. She highlighted the missions of WFWP and the Global Women’s Peace Network (GWPN), emphasizing the importance of a motherly heart in decision-making. She reflected on the experiences of Native women, acknowledging their strength and courage in the face of struggle. *“The stories of Native women are not only ones of*

struggle but also of inner strength, courage, and profound contribution. Through the preservation of traditions, they have paved the way for future generations,” she stated. President Moffitt expressed hope that the event would help restore and honor the role of Native women, creating a ripple effect for the future and fostering a nation that uplifts and values their vital contributions.



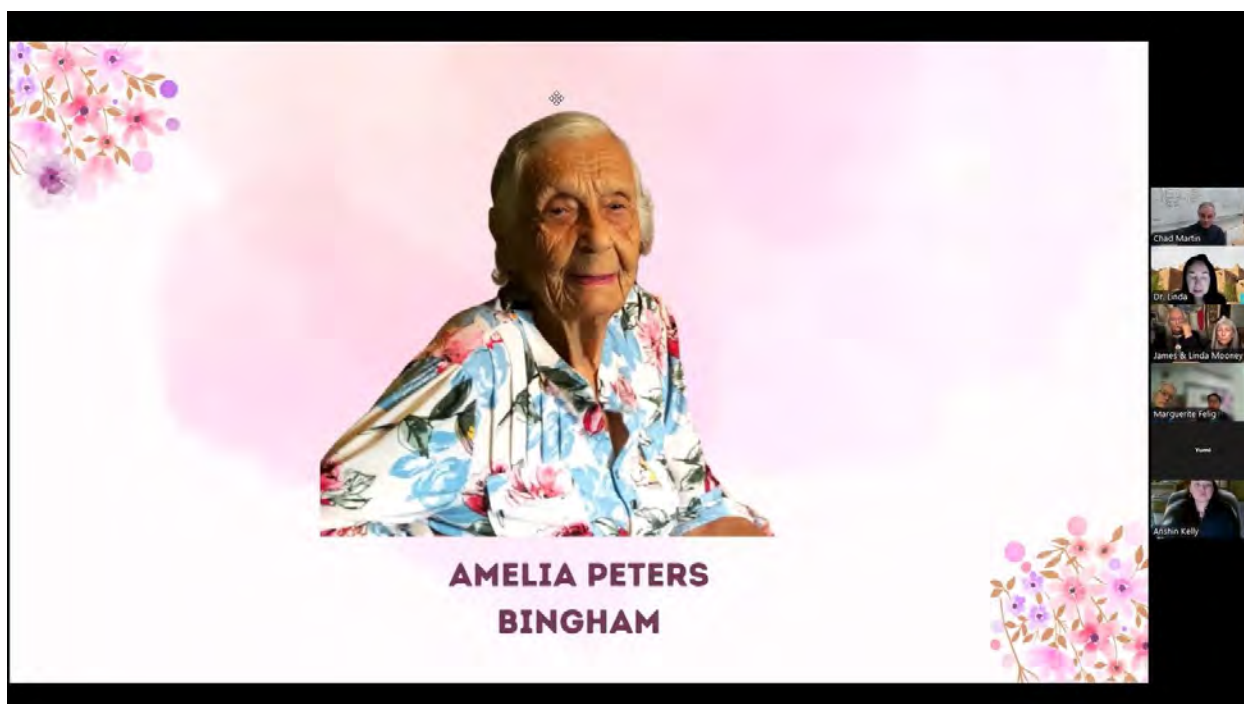
Together, four exemplary Wampanoag women leaders were honored with the prestigious HerStory Award for their extraordinary contributions. Two of these awards were presented posthumously, honoring remarkable Wampanoag women whose lives were dedicated to service.



The first to be honored was the **Honorable Ancestor, Elder Amelia Grace Peters Bingham** — a matriarch, tribal Elder, and Clan Mother of the Mashpee Wampanoag Turtle Clan. Elder Bingham dedicated her life to preserving Mashpee Wampanoag history, culture, and rights. Her visionary leadership led to the co-founding of the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian Tribal Council, the establishment of the Mashpee Museum, and the direction of the Title IV Indian Education Program. She also broke barriers as the first female Commissioner of Indian Affairs and served as a board member of the National Congress of American Indians. Her enduring legacy lives on through her family and her tireless advocacy for justice and equality.

The second HerStory Award was presented to the **Beloved Ancestor, Shirley Ann Jourdain Peters** — distinguished Mi’kmaq and Aquinnah Wampanoag leader. A steadfast advocate for social justice and tribal education, she played a pivotal role in championing tribal rights during the 1970s land claims era. She was also the first editor of the tribal newsletter Mittark, a vital platform for community communication and advocacy. Her commitment to community well-being was further demonstrated through her founding of Mashpee’s senior nutrition program and the introduction of the Meals on Wheels

initiative, providing compassionate care and support to elders in her community. Her warm heart, unwavering dedication, and legacy of service continue to inspire future generations.



The third HerStory Award was presented to **Paula Peters**, a communications professional, journalist, and activist from the Wampanoag Tribe of Mashpee. A fierce advocate for cultural justice and federal recognition for her tribal nation, Paula is the author of *Mashpee Nine: A Story of Cultural Justice* and numerous essays on Native American history. Through her company, Smoke Signals, she amplifies Indigenous voices and highlights Wampanoag heritage, bridging cultural gaps and advancing understanding. Surrounded by her family, Peters shared heartfelt reflections on the significance of the recognition. *“It is important to be recognized when you do this kind of work. You don’t seek recognition, but it is important for these children to see that the world cares — that someone in the world cares that this work is to be done. I can pass it on to them, and they can know what their responsibilities are, and for that, I am incredibly grateful,”* she said.

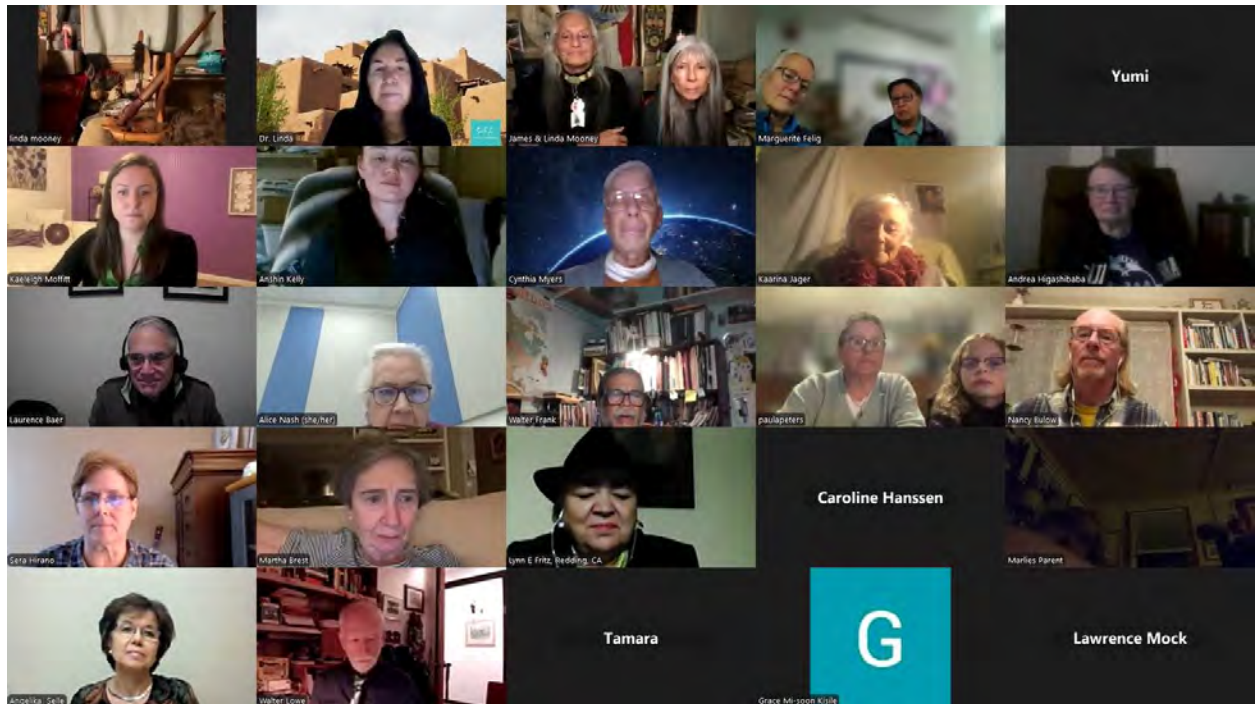


The fourth HerStory Award was presented to **Linda Coombs**, a proud citizen of the Aquinnah Wampanoag of Martha’s Vineyard, who has lived in Mashpee with the Mashpee Wampanoag Nation since 1977. A devoted grandmother, Linda has dedicated her career to preserving the cultural history of her people. With a career spanning 50 years as a museum educator, she began her journey at the Boston Children’s Museum, where she spent 11 years. She then worked for three years in the Wampanoag Indigenous Program at Plimoth Plantation, focusing on reclaiming significant aspects of her ancestors’ material culture. Linda served for nine years at the Aquinnah Cultural Center, a museum dedicated to the Aquinnah Wampanoag. She has served as an interpreter, researcher, and artisan throughout her career, leading workshops, writing children’s stories and articles on Wampanoag history and culture, and developing exhibits. Reflecting on her journey, she shared, *“Ever since I started my career, I have wanted*

to learn everything that my ancestors knew, and I feel that they have been with me — prompting me, giving me hints in their own way. I feel honored to have the ancestors that I have, living so closely with the earth, preserving the earth, and expressing love by keeping the earth as it was created.”

After the awards were presented, the program continued with a Q&A session. During this time, Ms. Linda and Ms. Paula took the opportunity to answer questions and share their insights about the Wampanoag.

We thank everyone who joined us in celebrating the lives and legacies of these remarkable Native American women, whose leadership and resilience continue to inspire future generations.



Learn more about Native Nations:

archive.ncai.org/

biamaps.geoplatform.gov/Tribal-Leaders-Directory/