

Making Home: Wabanaki Claims to the Midcoast 1600-1900

Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust
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First, some acknowledgements

Wabanaki peoples whose homelands I inhabit and work on, whose lives and struggles inform and inspire this work. I hope I can do some justice to what history has often erased.

Many scholars, teachers, archivists, community leaders whose work has informed what I have started.

You all for your invitation, your interest, and your questions.

The central (and oversized) question:

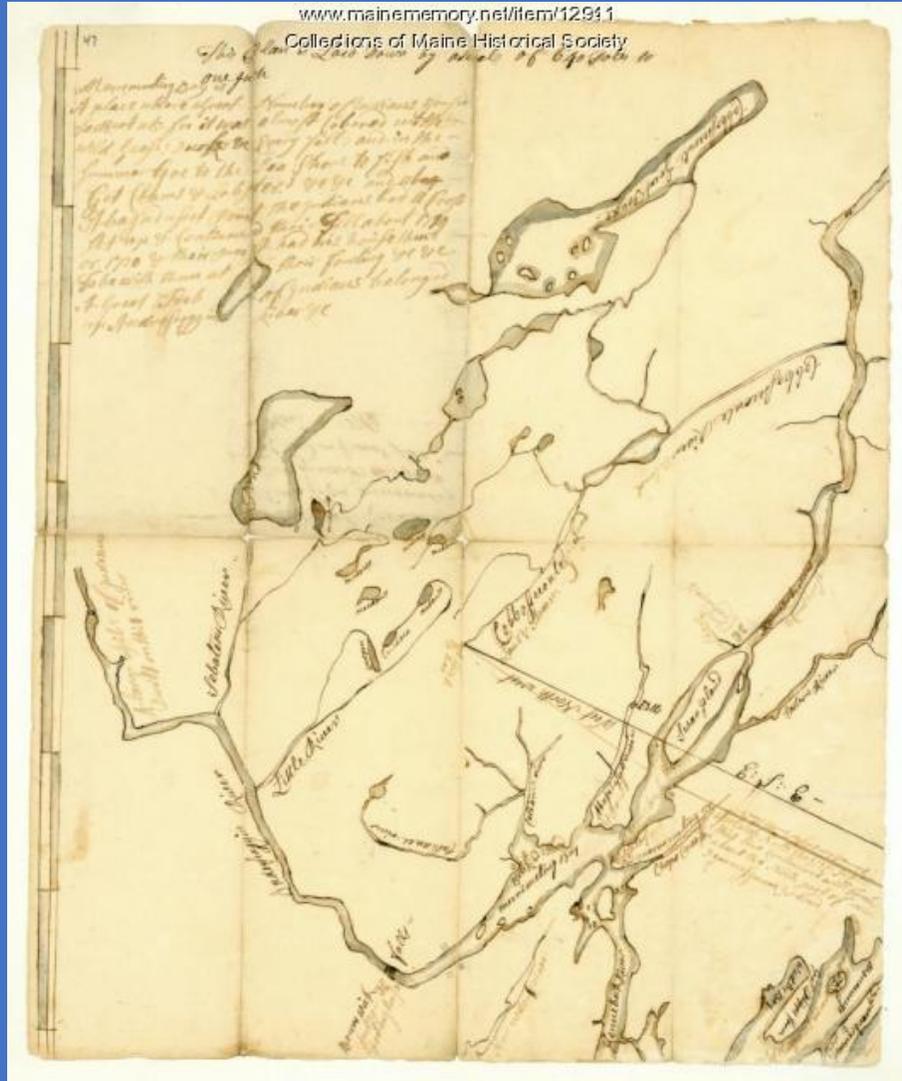
How have Wabanakis descendants defined and defended "home"?

A secondary (and still enormous) question:

How does that any answer help us think about cooperative and restorative justice
in terms of land and homeland?

(I include myself in "us" because of my work at Bates College, which also needs to
think more deeply about the land it occupies.)

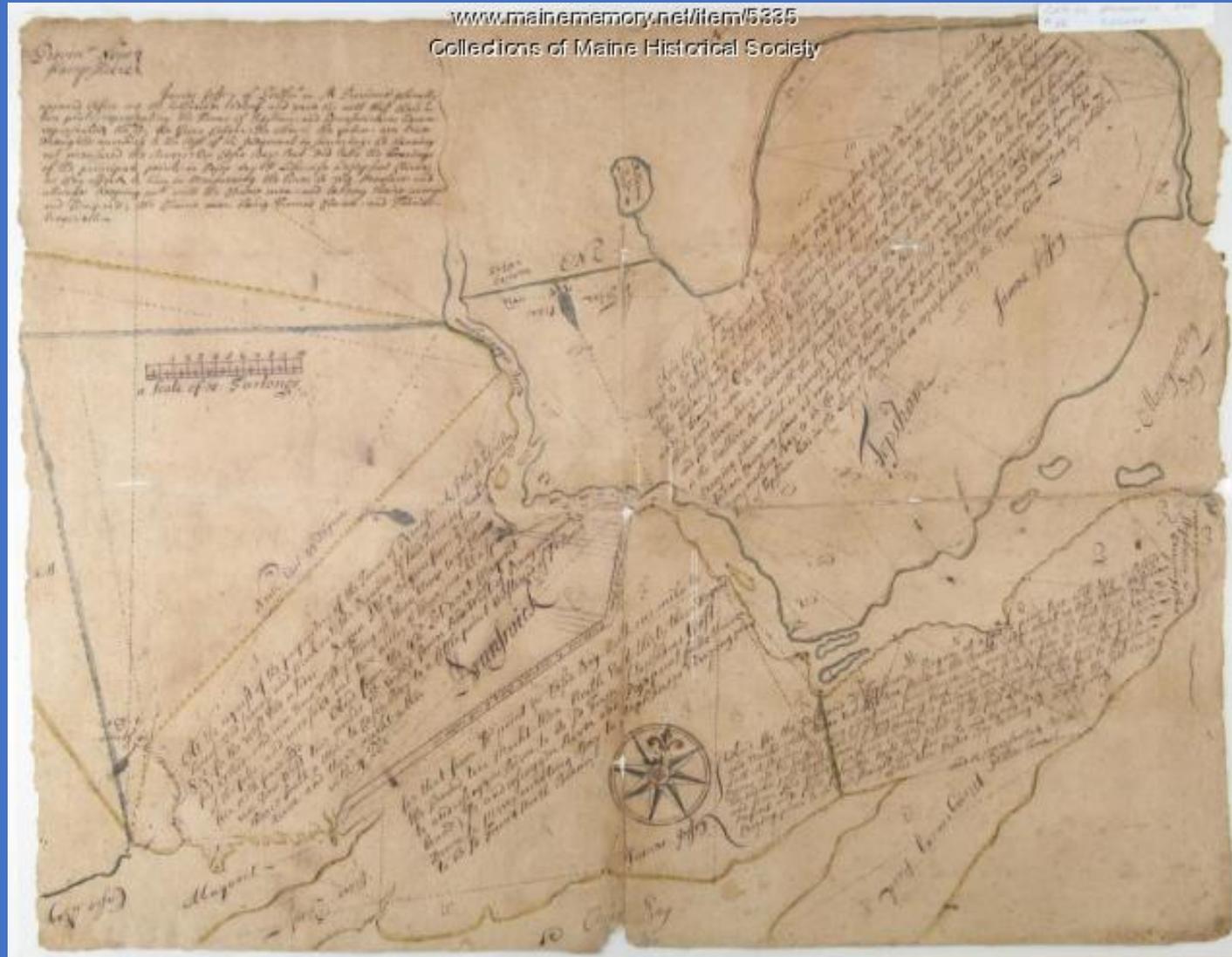
Recognizing how we see: “plan of Kennebec River from Merrymeeting Bay upwards” (1763)



Map made to identify the claims of the Plymouth Company (later Kennebec Proprietors) along the Kennebec River above Swans Island.

Maps defined by lines and space are ways to “know” the land. They are also techniques to claim and to own it.

Recognizing how we see: Brunswick and Topsham (ca. 1730)



James Jeffrey's survey of the two towns focuses on lines and borders.

The texts describe how he laid out and measured those lines.

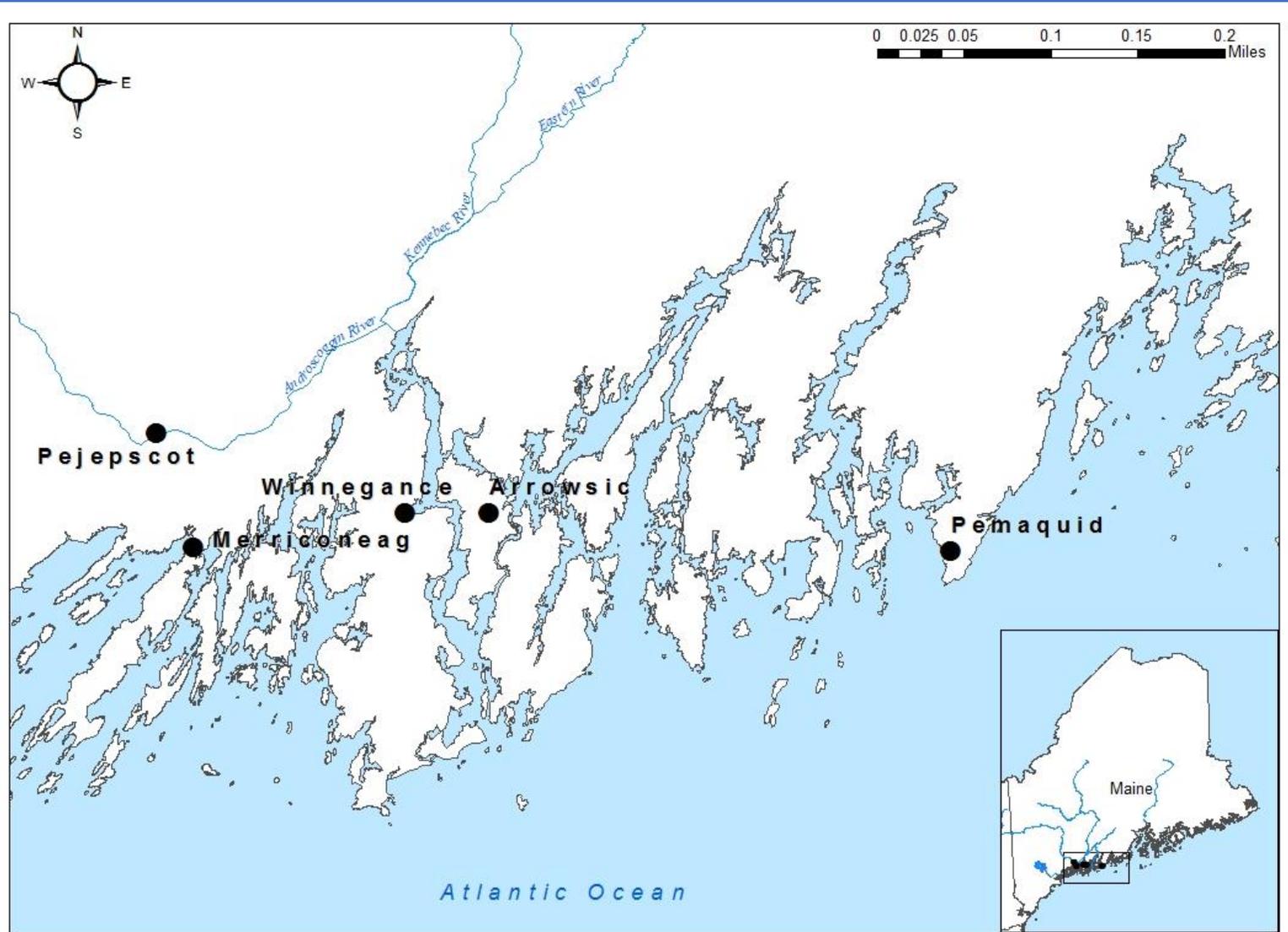
But there are other ways to see space and to make it a home.

Two visions of place in one land sale:

Sagettawon and Rawandagon, “Indian Sagamores,”
sale to
Nicholas Cole and John Purrington,
1672

...all the land laying and being between the two Carrying Places upon **Merrecanneg** beginning at the Head of the Westermost Branch of Wigger Cove so directly over to the Wester Bay to the Bight and so up along the Neck from side to side untill they come to the uppermost Carrying Place at the Head of the Wester Bay at the Meadow w[hi]ch George Phepeny has formerly mowd so over to the Head of the Creek that comes in from the Easter Bay....

Place names in land deeds mark networks: Portages, rapids, navigation aids



Wabanaki Names and Claims to Place, 1659-1717

Map by Shauna'h Fuegen

Pejepscot

Place of the long rocky rapids

Merriconeag

Place of the lazy carry

Winnegance

Little portage

Arrowsic

Place of obstruction (or rapids)

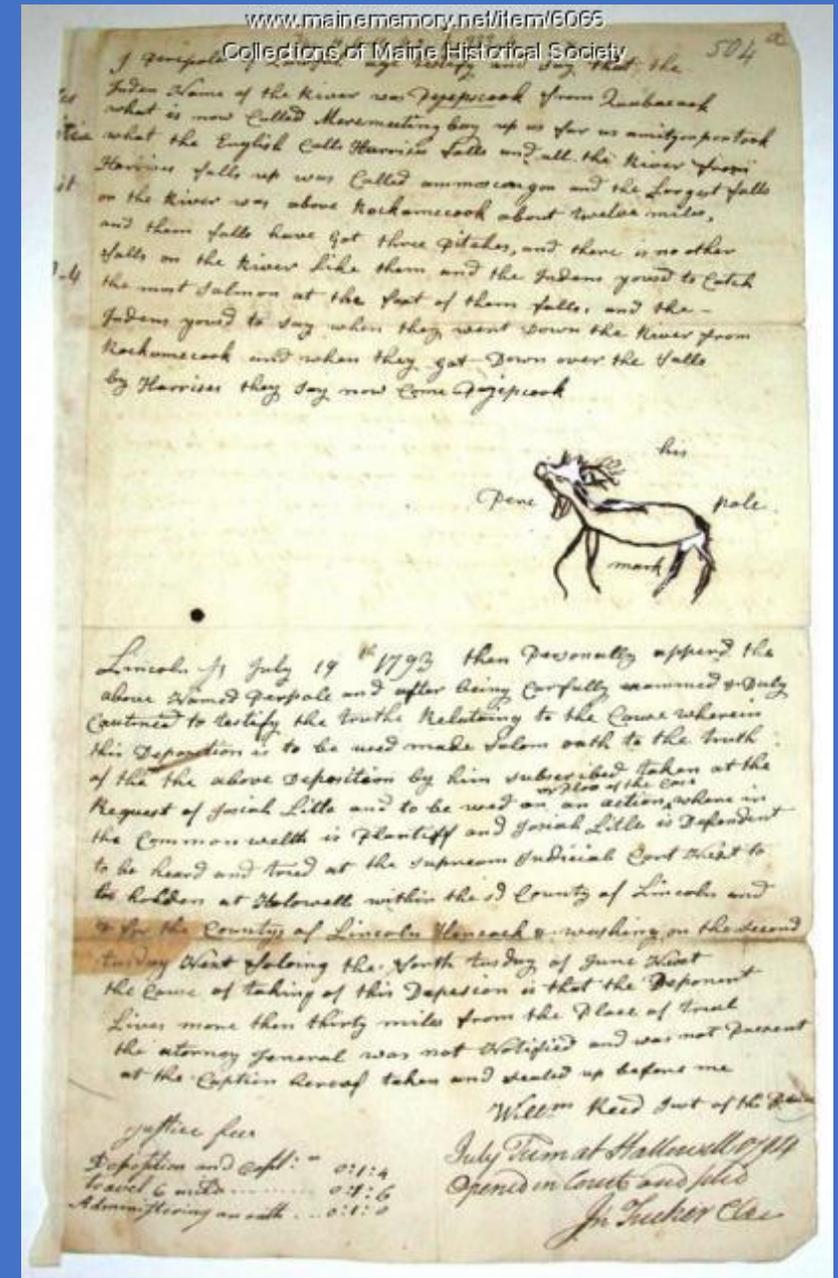
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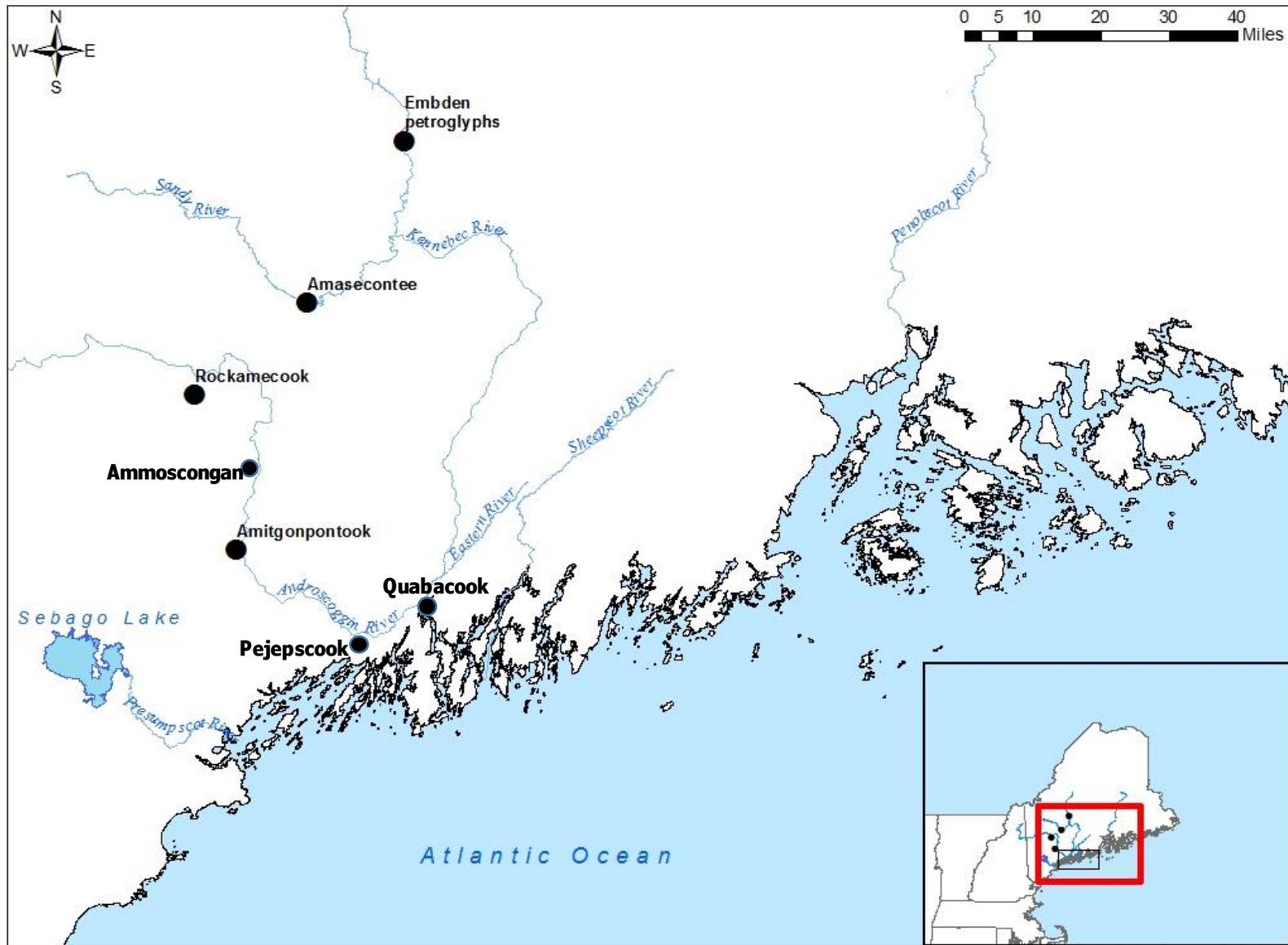
Point of land running out to sea

Describing a network of home places

Pere Pole [Pierpol] deposition, Hallowell, 1793

I Perepole of lawful age testify and say that the Indian Name of the River was **Pejepscook** from **Quabecook** what is now called Merymeeting Bay up as far as **amitgonpontook** what the English calls Harrisses falls and all the River from Harrisses falls up was called **ammoscongon** and the largest falls on the river was above **Rockamecook** about twelve miles, and them falls have got three pitches, and there is no other falls on the River like them and the Indians yused to catch the most Salmon at the foot of them falls, and the Indians yused to say when they went down the River from Rockamecook and when they got down over the falls by Harrises they say now come Pejepscook





Wabanaki Names and Claims to Place, 1659-1717

Map by Shauna'h Fuegen

Pierpol's home places

Quabacook
 "Water fowl hunting place" (roughly)

Pejepscook
 Long, rocky rapids

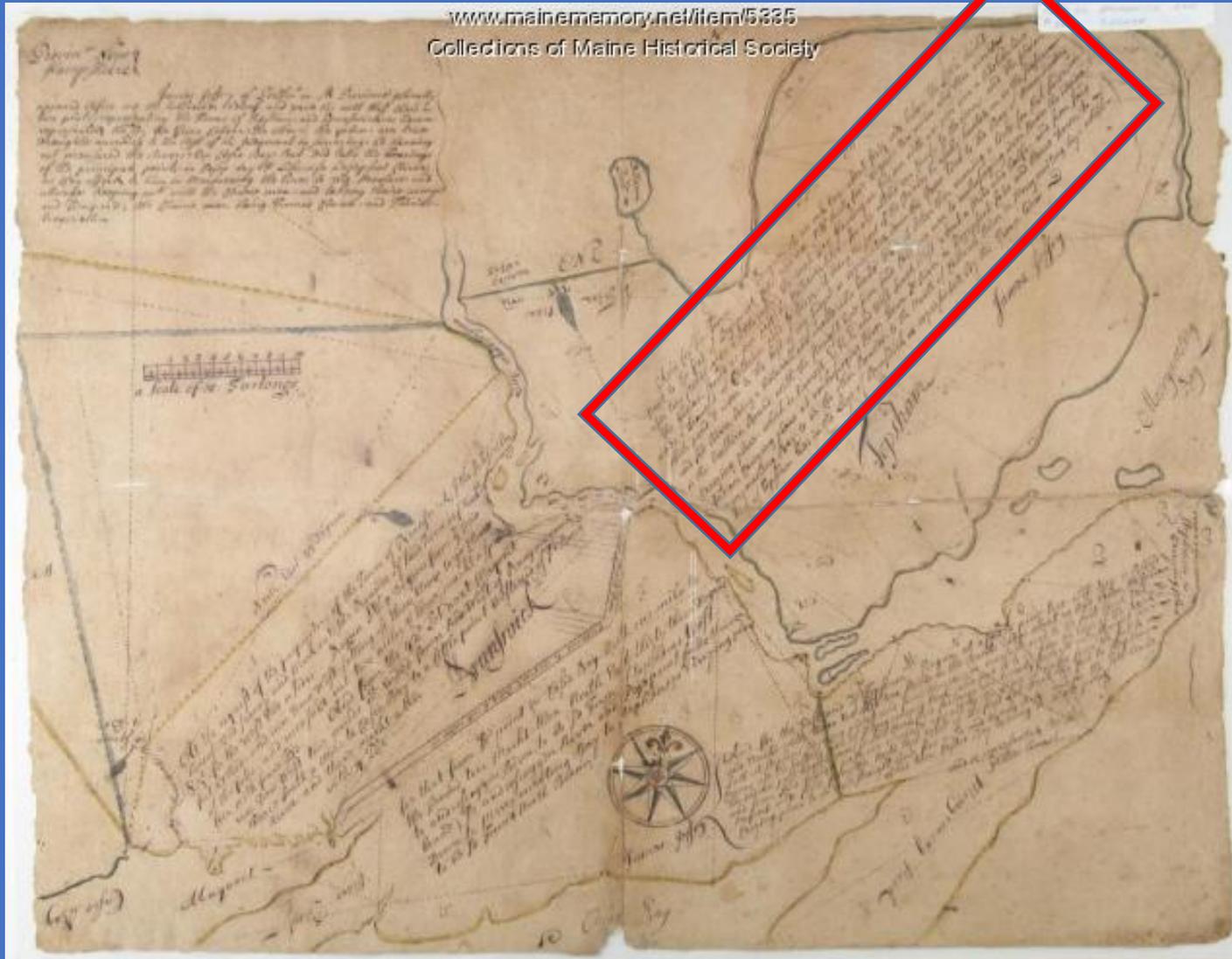
Amitgonpontook
 Place to catch and dry fish at the falls

Ammoscongon
 Fish drying place or plenty of fish

Rockamecook
 Good ground (for planting)

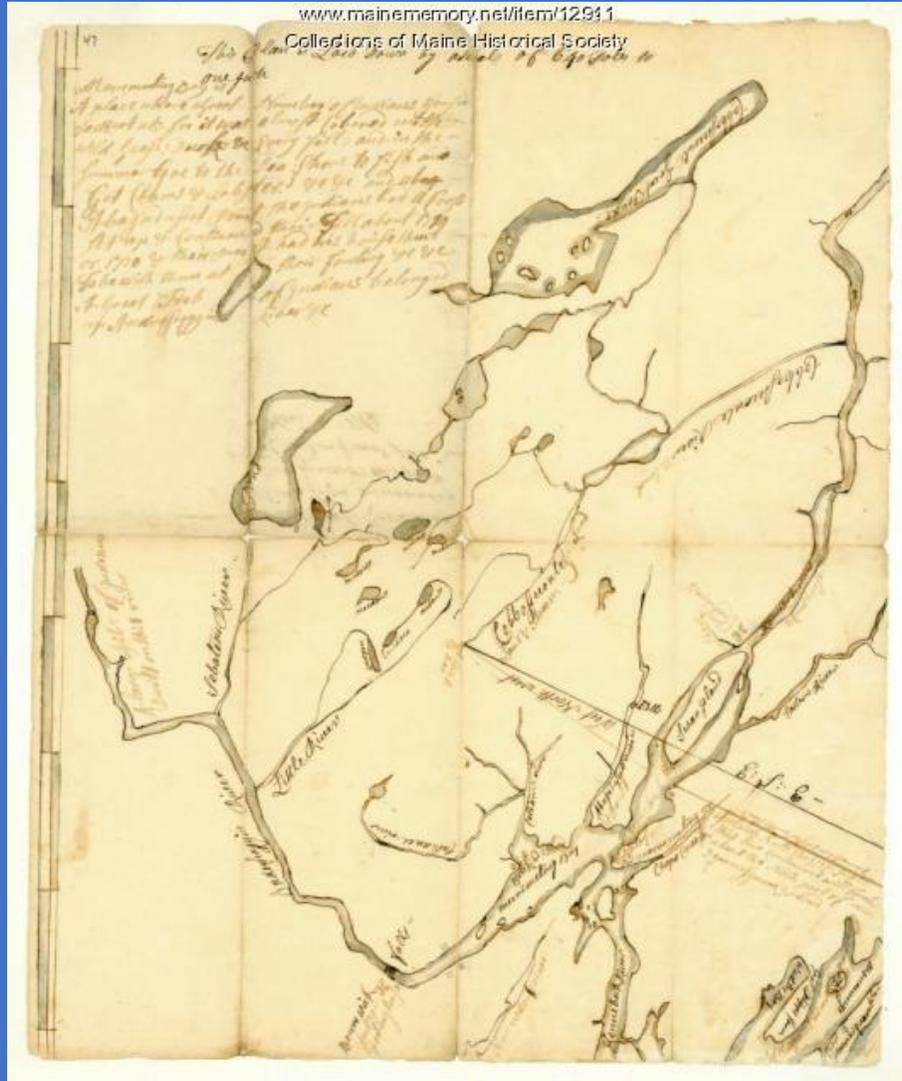
Other places
 -Amasecontee: plenty of fish
 -Embden: (an important sacred site that also centered on movement)

Looking closer: Brunswick and Topsham (ca. 1730)



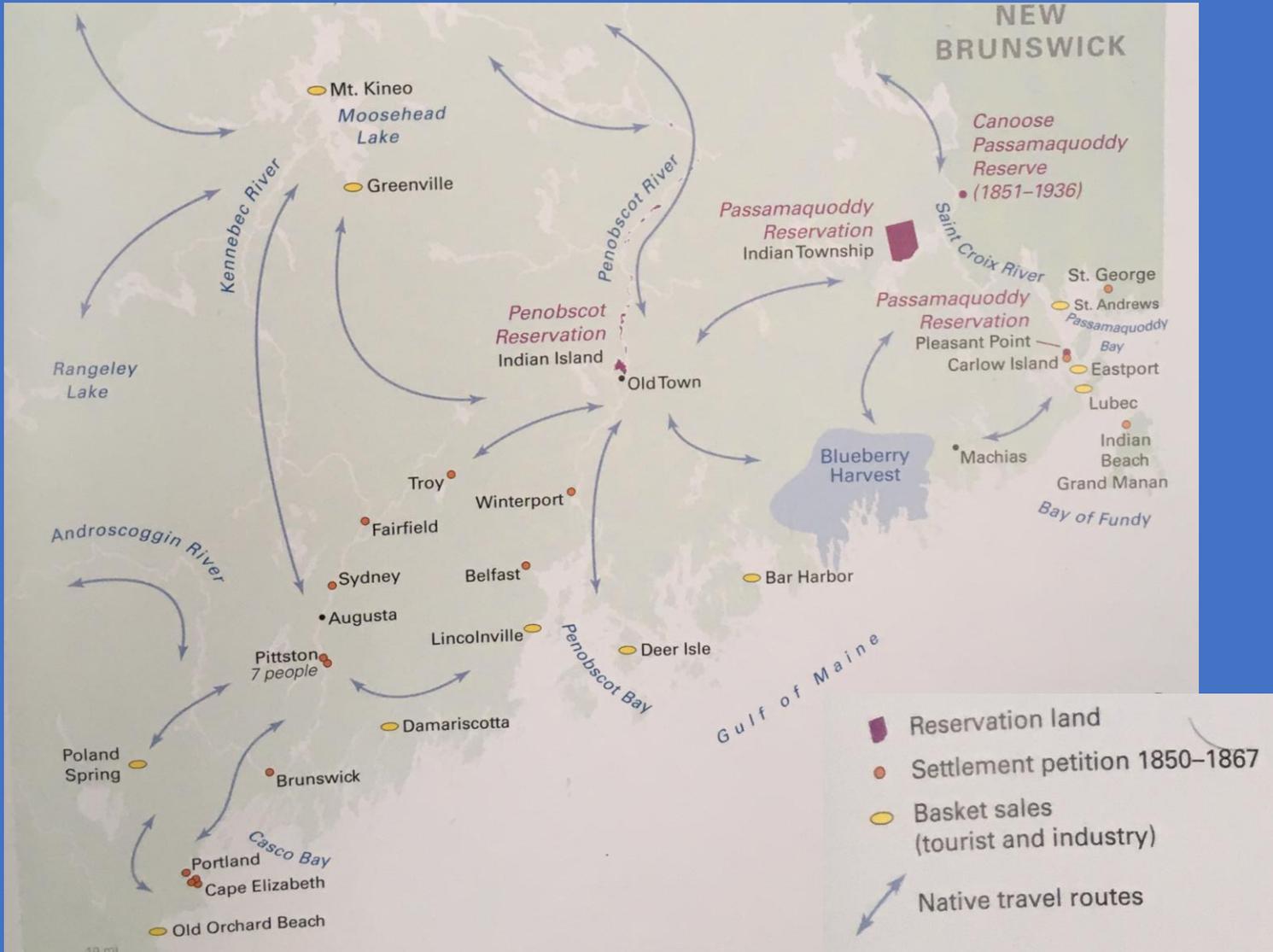
“...Haveing an Indian with uss wee run a NE 65d[egree] line[.] [T]he Indian showd us wee past by **Cathance** River: Soe wee alter'd our Course to the river: and the Indian made a Draught of Cathance pond & River, **it being his part of the Country** he usally [sic] hunted on in the season which pond & river to the best of my Judgnt [sic] is represented herin this Green line to the Bay of Merrymeeting....”

Looking closer: “plan of Kennebec River from Merrymeeting Bay upwards” (1763)



“Merremeeeting Bay is A place where a Great Number of Indians yoused to Meet at; for it was almost Covered with wilde Gease, Ducks &c Every fall: and in the summer goe to the Sea Shore to fish and Get Clams + Lobsters &c &c and at Abagadusset Point the Indians had a cross set up & continued their [sic] till about 1719 or 1720 & their preest had his house there To be with them at their fowling &c &c A Great Trib of Indians belonged up Androscoggin River &c”

Continued movement in a Wabanaki homeland, 1850-1910



Reservations did not confine Wabanakis.

-Settlement petitions (red dots from Portland to Belfast and Winterport)

-Basket-selling (yellow ovals from Old Orchard Beach to St. Andrews, NB)

-Map does not mention peoples who were independent of reservations.

How have Wabanakis defined and defended "home"?

Wabanakis have moved to places of different activities.

Colonization has required them to adapt how they move and why they move: Railroads and cars replaced canoes, and basket-selling and blueberry picking replaced fishing and hunting.

But their homeland still extended (and extends) beyond their reservation lands. They have not stopped thinking about these lands as theirs.

How does that understanding help us think about cooperative and restorative justice in terms of land and homeland?

Important to ask, who is this for?

To the extent Wabanakis should be involved (and I think they should), it is important to be aware of long and varied history, often violent and traumatic.

Important to work with communities (understood broadly). The continuing process of colonization has been about turning communities into isolated individuals.

It also seems to me that thinking in terms of networks and activities will be more helpful than thinking in terms of parcels.

Wabanakis have not ceased to inhabit these places. This should also raise very difficult questions of how to respect access in ways that go beyond “permission.”