



# Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation

Kuweeqáhsun, Good morning. Let me first begin by thanking you for the opportunity to speak at this forum.

**Eastern Pequot  
Tribal Nation  
Tribal Council**

**Mitchel Ray**  
Chairman

My name is Mitchel Ray, the newly elected tribal chairman of the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, located in North Stonington on one of the oldest continuously occupied reservations in the country, established in 1683.

**Brenda Geer**  
Vice Chairwoman

For me, as an elected tribal leader, tribal member, and human, I cannot state enough the feeling of discontent over the subject of the John Mason statue which rests at the Connecticut Capitol building.

**Joanne Silva-  
Njoku**  
Corresponding  
Secretary

While I cannot come up with a figure for how many people of Connecticut know of the history of John Mason, I can say with certainty the majority if not all Pequots know of the devastation John Mason inflicted upon our ancestors some 384 years ago. Hundreds of Pequots, men, women, children, and elders murdered and massacred by his sword. Out of this conflict came the division of our beautiful Pequot nation, split between East and West. Which continues to keep us separated today, thankfully only politically.

**Tyrone Gambrell**  
Comptroller

A committee was formed in 1995 and it was agreed upon to have the statue moved to another site. Both Eastern and Western Pequots helped to remove the John Mason Statue from Groton. Most notably by Eastern Pequot Tribal Elder Wolf Jackson.

**Valerie Gambrell**  
Councilor

The statue in Groton was unveiled in 1889, around the time of Western American expansion. A time in history where conflict between Americans and Indigenous people grew. These conflicts led to the statue's conception, ultimately a massacre that we know of today called "Wounded Knee" where over 140 Lakota were killed on December 29, 1890.

**Natasha Gambrell**  
Councilor

**Larry Pemberton**  
Councilor

Some conflicts, to name a few that lead up to statue being placed in 1889 were;

**La'Tasha Maddox**  
Councilor

The Battle of Little Bighorn 1876  
Cheyenne's War 1878-1879  
Geronimo's Apache War 1885

**Lawrence Wilson**  
Councilor

There are many more in the 1800's that I cannot mention due to time, but they paint a picture of the American psyche; Americans need to "tame the land & get rid of the Indian"

**Kiana Scruggs**  
Councilor

When we talk about a cultural/anthropological climate, we can view all of us that are gathered here today as a shift in the atmosphere from the 1800's to make a positive long-lasting change.

**Jamus Eccleston**  
Councilor

The mentality of the 1800's carried over into the new century with the construction of a John Mason Statue to be proudly displayed at Connecticut's Capitol building in 1908, 30 years after the completion of the Capitol.

We have an opportunity to remove a celebratory figure of genocide and move forward where we all can plant and sustain without the reminder of the atrocities that took place before we got to where we are today.

I am here today to honor our fallen Pequot ancestors by making sure the next 7 generations don't have to carry these feelings of loss in our state capitol every time we pass through these doors. The statue should be placed in an area to educate, not an area to promote degradation to Southern New England Natives in the most politicized area in all of Connecticut... The State Capitol.

Please consider removing this statue from the Hartford Capitol and show our descendants Connecticut doesn't carry the same mindset from the 1800's.

Kutaputush Thank you  
Mitchel Ray Eastern Pequot Tribal Chairman