

Chapter **6**

## Fort Mystic

### The English Settlers Torch Fort Mystic

May 26, 1637

Four strong native nations coexisted in southern New England at the beginning of the seventeenth century: the Massachusetts, the Wampanoag, the Narragansett, and the Pequot. Each had a territory it controlled as its own, and each was wary of the others. Until the arrival of visitors from the Old World, these four nations maintained an armed, but relatively stable, peace. The arrival of European explorers, fishermen, traders, and colonists, and the epidemics unleashed by their presence, upset that stability. An epidemic that swept southward along the Atlantic coast hit the Massachusetts people hard and the Wampanoag even harder. Whole villages were left deserted. The decimation of their populations led these two nations to be more receptive to English settlers than they otherwise might have been. They permitted the English to settle among them, hoping the colonists would reinforce their numbers and restore equilibrium to the balance of power among the peoples of southern New England.

The Narragansetts, however, had been only slightly touched by the epidemic of 1617. They acknowledged the arrival of the Pilgrims not with gestures of friendship, but with a bundle of arrows wrapped in snakeskin. The Pilgrims presumed this to be a message of hostility and sent a bundle of bullets back in reply. Similarly, the Pequots were not disposed to view the English kindly. At first the newcomers had been few in number and more a matter of curiosity than concern. After all, the Pequots were strong and confident. No wave of epidemic had yet passed across their lands. Their warriors were respected for their skill and courage and their villages were fortified. The Pequots dominated the valley of the Connecticut and most of their neighbors acquiesced to their leadership. But with the passage of time, the English settlements had begun to proliferate. The handful of immigrants had grown to 5,000 by 1636, and what had been a novelty was quickly turning into a potential menace as the English outposts moved ever closer to Pequot lands. For each, the mere presence of the other posed a threat. To the English, the Pequots were an obstacle to expansion of settlement and trade. By dominating the Connecticut River valley, the Pequots controlled the natural pathway into the New England interior, and they seemed more inclined to direct the flow of furs and other com-

merce toward the Dutch, the commercial rivals of the English. To the Pequots, repeated English demands to accede to new settlements, embrace the newcomers' religion, and acknowledge the supremacy of English authority left them offended and defiant. Tensions grew and exploded into open warfare in 1637.

- **First Impressions: "To See Them Thus Frying in the Fyer"**

The war was brief, brutal, and conclusive, having but two main battles: the first at Fort Mystic and the second at the Sadqua Swamp near New Haven. Both produced wholesale massacres of the Pequot people. The ferocity of the massacre at Fort Mystic is described here by the soldiers involved. Unfortunately, there are no known contemporary accounts of the massacre by the Pequots or other native peoples of the time.

#### Source 1: Sermon of the Rev. Edward Johnson, 1637

Fellow soldiers, countrymen, and companions in this wilderness work, . . . you need not question your authority to execute those whom God, the righteous Judge of all the world, hath condemned for blaspheming His sacred majesty, and murdering his servants: every common soldier among you is now installed a magistrate; then show yourselves men of courage. . . . [T]he Lord hath prepared this honor for you, oh you courageous soldiers of His, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and correction among the people, to bind their kings in chains, and nobles in fetters of iron, that they may execute upon them the judgements that are written: this honor shall be to all His saints. But some of you may suppose death's stroke may cut you short of this: let every faithful soldier of Christ Jesus know, that the cause why some of His endeared servants are taken away by death in a just war (as this assuredly is) is not because they should fall short of the honors accompanying such noble designs, but rather because earth's honors are too scant for them, therefore the everlasting crown must be set upon their heads forthwith. Then march on with a cheerful Christian courage in the strength of the Lord and the power of His might, who will forthwith enclose your enemies in your hands, make their multitudes fall under your warlike weapons, and your feet shall soon be set upon their proud necks.

#### Source 2: Notes of William Bradford, governor of Plymouth Colony

Anno Dom: 1637.

In the fore parte of this year, the Pequents fell openly upon the English at Conightecute, in the lower parts of the river, and slew sundry of them [as they

were at work in the fields], both men & women, to the great terrour of the rest; and wente away in great prid & triumph. . . . They also assailed a fort at the rivers mouth, though strong and well defended; and though they did not their prevaile, yet it struk them with much fear & astonishmente to see their bould attempts in the face of danger; which made them on all places to stand upon their gard, and to prepare for resistance, and to solissite their friends and confederats in the Bay of Massachusetts to send them speedy aide, for they looked for more forcible assaults. . . .

In the mean time, the Pequents, espetially in the winter before, sought to make peace with the Narigansets, and used very pernicious arguments to move them therunto: as that the English were stranegers and begane to overspred their countrie, and would deprive them therof in time, if they were sufferred to grow & increse; and if the Narigansets did assist the English to subdue them, they did but make way for their owne overthrow, for if they were rooted out, the English would soone take occasion to subjugate them; and if they would harken to them, they should not neede to fear the strength of the English; for they would not come to open battle with them, but fire their houses, kill their katle, and lye in ambush for them as they went abroad on their occasions; and all this they might easily doe without any or little danger to them selves. The which course being held, they well saw the English could not long subsiste, but they would either be starved with hunger, or be forced to forsake the countrie. . . . [T]he Narigansets were once wavering, and were halfe minded to have made peace with them, and joyned against the English. But againe when they considered, how much wrong they had received from the Pequents, and what an oppertunitie they now had by the help of the English to right them selves, revenge was so sweete unto them, as it prevailed above all the rest; so as they resolved to joyne with the English against them, & did.

From Connightecute, they sett out a partie of men, and an other partie mett them from the Bay, at the Narigansets, who were to joyne with them. The Narigansets were earnest to be gone before the English were well rested and refreshte. . . . It should seeme their desire was to come upon the enemie sudenly, & undiscovered. . . .

So they went on, and so ordered their march, as the Indians brought them to a forte of the enemies (in which most of their cheefe men were) before day. They approached the same with great silence, and surrounded it with both English & Indeans, that they might not breake out; and so assaulted them with great courage, shooting amongst them, and entered the forte with all speed.

**Source 3: Account of Captain John Underhill, [second in command of Connecticut troops, May 26, 1637**

Having our swords in our right hand, our carbines or muskets in our left hand, we approached the fort, Master Hedge being shot through both arms, and more wounded. Though it be not commendable for a man to make mention of anything that might tend to his own honor, yet because I would have the providence of God observed, and His name magnified, as well for myself as others, I dare not omit, but let the world know, that deliverance was given to us that command, as well as to private soldiers. Captain Mason and myself entering into the wigwams, he was shot, and received many arrows against his head-piece. God preserved him from many wounds. Myself received a shot in the left hip, through a sufficient buff coat, that if I had not been supplied with such a garment, the

arrow would have pierced me. Another I received between neck and shoulders, hanging in the linen of my head-piece. Others of our soldiers were shot, some through the shoulders, some in the face, some in the head, some in the legs, Captain Mason and myself losing each of us a man, and had nearly twenty wounded. Most courageously these Pequots behaved themselves. But seeing the fort was too hot for us, we devised a way how we might save ourselves and prejudice them. Captain Mason entering into a wigwam, brought out a firebrand, after he had wounded many in the house. Then he set fire on the west side, where he entered; myself set fire on the south end with a train of powder. The fires of both meeting in the center of the fort, blazed most terribly, and burnt all in the space of half an hour. Many courageous fellows were unwilling to come out, and fought most desperately through the palisadoes, so as they were scorched and burnt with the very flame, and were deprived of their arms—in regard to the fire burnt their very bowstrings—and so perished valiantly. Mercy did they deserve for their valor, could we have had opportunity to have bestowed it. Many were burnt in the fort, both men, women, and children. Others forced out, and came in troops . . . , twenty and thirty at a time, which our soldiers received and entertained with the point of the sword. Down fell men, women, and children. . . .

Great and doleful was the bloody sight to the view of young soldiers that never had been in war, to see so many souls lie gasping on the ground, so thick, in some places, that you could hardly pass along. It may be demanded, Why should you be so furious? Should not Christians have more mercy and compassion? But I would refer you to David's war. . . . Sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents. Sometimes the case alters; but we will not dispute it now. We have sufficient light from the Word of God for our proceedings. . . .

So remarkable it appeared to us, as we could not but admire at the providence of God in it, that soldiers so unexpert in the use of their arms, should give so complete a volley, as though the finger of God had touched both match and flint. . . .

Our Indians came to us, and much rejoiced at our victories, and greatly admired the manner of Englishmen's fight, but cried mach it, mach it; that is, It is naught, it is naught, because it is too furious, and slays too many men.

**Source 4: Notes of William Bradford, 1637**

[A]nd those that first entered found sharp resistance from the enemie, who both shott at & graped with them; others rane into their howses & brought out fire, and sett them on fire, which soon took in their matts, &, standing close together, with the wind, all was quickly on a flame, and thereby more were burnt to death then was otherwise slain; it burnt their bowstrings, and made them un-servisable. Those that scaped the fire were slaine with the sword; some hewed to peeces, others rune throw with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatchte, and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearfull sight to see them thus frying in the fyer, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stinck & sente ther of; but the victory seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prays therof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to inclose their enmise in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud & insulting an enemie.

to annihilate the enemy to prove dominance. The Puritans waged war with a viciousness that shocked the so-called savages of America. By the manner in which they dealt with the Pequots, the Puritans opened the way for the expansion of English settlements across southern New England. And it was many years before any native people dared again to challenge them.

• **Second Impressions: "Where Today Are the Pequots?"**

The massacre at Fort Mystic brought an end to the Pequot as a powerful nation. Tecumseh, a leader of the Shawnee Nation, observed in 1811, "Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pocanet, and other powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and oppression of the white man, as snow before the summer sun." The manner in which the Pequots were destroyed has provoked a great deal of comment over the years, as indicated by the selections that follow. As for the Pequots themselves, the nation has rebounded somewhat in vitality and numbers, as Pequot descendants have settled into a peaceful—and increasingly profitable—co-existence with the state of Connecticut.

**Source 8: Historian John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America*, 1741**

The Pequots were retir'd into two strong Forts, one on the River Mystick. . . . The English surpriz'd the . . . Fort in the Night, on Intelligence from an Indian Spy, that the Enemy was asleep. The Huts in the Fort being made of combustible Matter, the English soon set fire to them. Many of the Savages were burnt, and those that endeavoured to escape were killed by the English, being shot as they climb'd the Pallisades or sallied out at the Gates. Not above 7 or 8 of 4 or 500 Indians that were in the Fort, made their Escape. The English had but two kill'd. . . . The Narragantsets stood all the while aloof, and with infinite Pleasure saw the Destruction of the Pequots, showing their barbarous Joy by dancing, howling, and insulting over their late dreaded Enemy. Wequash, the Indian Spy was struck with such Admiration at this Victory, that he turn'd Christian upon it, and in Time became a Preacher to his Countrymen, who insulted, and at last poisoned him. He died very religiously, committing his Soul to Christ, and his only child to the English, wishing it might know more of Jesus than its poor Father had done.

**Source 9: Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*, 1765**

The Indians, in alliance with the English, had taken eighteen captives, ten males and eight females, four of the males were disposed of, one to each of four sa-

**Source 5: Journal of John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts Bay, 1637**

our English from Connecticut, with their Indians, and many of the Narragansetts, arch'd in the night to a fort of the Pequods at Mistick, and, besetting the same about break of the day, after two hours' fight, they took it, (by firing it) and slew therein two chief sachems, and one hundred and fifty fighting men, and about one hundred and fifty old men, women, and children, with the loss of only two English, whereof but one was killed by the enemy. Divers of the Indian friends are hurt by the English, because they had not some mark to distinguish them from the Pequods.

**Source 6: John Winthrop to William Bradford, May 28, 1637**

worthy sir:

I received your loving letter, and am much provoked to express my affections towards you, but straitnes of time forbids me; for my desire is to acquaint you with the Lords greates mercies towards us, in our prevailing against his & our enemies, that you may rejoyce and praise his name with us. . . .

There have been now slaine & taken, in all, aboute 700. The rest are dispersed, and the Indeans in all quarters so terrified as all their friends are affraid receive them.

Yours assured,  
Jo. Winthrop

The 28. of the 5. month, 1637.

**Source 7: Notes of the Rev. Edward Johnson, 1637**

The Lord in mercy toward his poore Churches having thus destroyed these bloody barbarous Indians, he returned his people in safety . . . where they may take account of their prisoners: the Squawes and young youth they brought home with them, and finding the men to be deeply guilty of the crimes they undertooke the warre for, they brought away onely their heads as a token of their victory. This means the Lord strook a trembling terror into all the Indians round about.

**The Pequot War**

The Pequot War was the first time that any of the native peoples who shared their lands in the New World with the pious newcomers had witnessed the full force of the European style of warfare, and they were left stunned by what they saw. Though Native Americans had warred among themselves for centuries before the English colonists settled in their midst, they recognized something fundamentally different in the style of warfare waged by the newcomers. Native Americans fought with ferocity but they fought mostly to demonstrate superiority. It was not necessary

chems, the rest put to the sword. Four of the females were left at the fort, the other four carried to Connecticut, where the Indians challenged them as their prize; the English not agreeing to it they were sacrificed also to end the dispute. The policy, as well as the morality of this proceeding, may well be questioned. The Indians have ever shewn great barbarity toward their English captives, the English in too many instances have retaliated it. This has only enraged them the more. Besides, to destroy women and children, for the barbarity of their husbands and parents, cannot easily be justified.

*Source 10: William Robertson, The History of the  
Discovery and Settlement of America, 1788*

The Pequods were a formidable people, who could bring into the field a thousand warriors not inferior in courage to any in the New World. They foresaw, not only that the extermination of the Indian race must be the consequence of permitting the English to spread over the continent of America, but that, if measures were not speedily concerted to prevent it, the calamity would be unavoidable. With this view they applied to the Narragansets, requesting them to forget ancient animosities for a moment, and to co-operate with them in expelling a common enemy who threatened both with destruction. . . .

But the Narragansets and Pequods, like most of the contiguous tribes in America, were rivals, and there subsisted between them an hereditary and implacable enmity. Revenge is the darling passion of savages. . . . The Narragansets, instead of closing with the prudent proposal of their neighbors, . . . entered into an alliance with the English against them. The Pequods, more exasperated than discouraged by the impudence and treachery of their countrymen, took the field, and carried on the war in the usual mode of Americans. . . .

The troops of Connecticut . . . found it necessary to advance towards the enemy. They [the Pequot] were posted on a rising ground, in the middle of a swamp towards the head of the river Mystic, which they had surrounded with palisades, the best defence that their slender skill in the art of fortification had discovered. Though they knew that the English were in motion, yet, with the usual improvidence and security of savages, they took no measures either to observe their progress, or to guard against being surprised themselves. The enemy [English settlers], unperceived, reached the palisades [May 25]; and if a dog had not given the alarm by barking, the Indians must have been massacred without resistance. In a moment, however, they startled to arms, and raising the war cry, prepared to repel the assailants. But at that early period of their intercourse with the Europeans, the Americans were little acquainted with the use of gunpowder, and dreaded its effects extremely. While some of the English galled them with an incessant fire through the intervals between the palisades, others forced their way by the entries into the fort, filled only with branches of trees; and setting fire to the huts which were covered by reeds, the confusion and terror quickly became general. Many of the women and children perished in the flames; and the warriors, in endeavoring to escape, were either slain by the English, or, falling into the hands of their Indian allies, who surrounded the fort at a distance, were reserved for a more cruel fate. After the junction of the troops from Massachusetts, the English resolved to pursue their victory; and hunting the Indians from one place of retreat to another, some subsequent encounters were hardly less fatal to them than the action on the Mystik. In less than three months the tribe of Pequods were extirpated. . . .

In this first essay of their arms, the colonists of New England seem to have been conducted by skilful and enterprising officers, and displayed both courage and perseverance as soldiers. But they stained their laurels by the use which they made of victory. Instead of treating the Pequods as an independent people, who made a gallant effort to defend the property, the rights, and the freedom of their nation, they retaliated upon them all the barbarities of American war. Some they massacred in cold-blood, others they gave up to be tortured by their Indian allies, a considerable number they sold as slaves in Bermudas, the rest were reduced to servitude among themselves.

But reprehensible as this conduct of the English must be deemed, their vigorous efforts in this decisive campaign filled all the surrounding tribes of Indians with such a high opinion of their valour as secured a long tranquility to all their settlements.

*Source 11: George Bancroft, History of the United States,  
1882*

To the tribe on Mystic river their bows and arrows seemed formidable weapons; ignorant of European fortresses, they viewed their palisades with complacency; and, as the English boats sailed by, it was rumored that their enemies had vanished through fear. Hundreds of the Pequods spent much of the last night of their lives in rejoicing, at a time when the sentinels of the English were within hearing of their songs. . . .

The vigor and courage displayed by the settlers on the Connecticut, in this first Indian war in New England, secured a long period of peace. The infant was safe in its cradle, the laborer in the fields, the solitary traveller during the night-watches in the forest; the houses needed no bolts, the settlements no palisades. The constitution which, on the fourteenth of January, 1639, was adopted, was of unexampled liberality.

*Source 12: Historian John Fiske, The Beginnings of New  
England, 1889*

The tribe which had lorded it so fiercely over the New England forests was all at once wiped out of existence. So terrible a vengeance the Indians had never heard of. If the name of Pequot had hitherto been a name of terror so now did the Englishmen win the inheritance of that deadly prestige. . . .

Such scenes of wholesale slaughter are not pleasant reading in this milder age. But our forefathers felt that the wars of Canaan afforded a sound precedent for such cases; and, indeed, if we remember what the soldiers of Tilly and Wallenstein were doing at this very time in Germany, we shall realize that the work of Mason and Underhill would not have been felt by anyone in that age to merit censure or stand in need of excuses. As a matter of practical policy the annihilation of the Pequots can be condemned only by those who read history so incorrectly as to suppose that savages, whose business is to torture and slay, can always be dealt with according to the methods in use between civilized peoples. A mighty nation, like the United States, is in honor bound to treat the fedman with scrupulous justice and refrain from cruelty in punishing his delinquencies. But if the founders of Connecticut in confronting a danger which threat-

ened their very existence, struck with savage fierceness, we can not blame them. The world is so made that it is only in that way that the higher races have been able to preserve themselves and carry on their progressive work.

The overthrow of the Pequots was a cardinal event in the planting of New England.

**Source 13: Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People*, 1902**

That very summer [1637] war came—war with the bold and dangerous Pequots, the masters of the Connecticut and the shores of the Sound; and nobody but Roger Williams could have held the Narragansett tribes off from joining them to destroy the settlements. A hostile union and concerted onset of all the tribes, effected then, as the Pequot plotted, might have meant annihilation. There were but five thousand Englishmen . . . scattered in the settlements, and such a rising put everything at stake. The Narragansetts occupied the lands which lay between Plymouth and the valley of the Connecticut. Mr. Williams had been much among them while he lived at Plymouth; had learned their language, and thoroughly won their liking. . . . They had given him lands very gladly when he came among them a fugitive; now they hearkened to him rather than to the fierce Pequot chiefs. . . .

The Pequots had grown very hot against the English crowding in. No Englishman's life was safe anywhere . . . because of them through the anxious winter of 1636-1637. . . . When summer came, therefore, the settlers set themselves ruthlessly to exterminate the tribe. A single bloody season of fire and the sword, and the work was done. . . . The terrible business cleared all the river valley and all the nearer regions by the Sound, and English settlers began to pour in again with a new heart.

**Source 14: Professors Charles Segal and David C. Stineback, *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny*, 1977**

Ultimately, the problems that led to the outbreak of the Pequot War were generated within the Massachusetts Bay Colony itself and were stimulated by the Puritan desire to control all settlement in New England. In 1634, the authority of the Boston magistrates had been questioned by the Reverend Thomas Hooker and his followers—a challenge that matured in 1635, when the dissenters decided to colonize an area of Connecticut that was outside the Massachusetts Bay Company patent and comprised a portion of the territory yielded by the Pequots. But this location already had been claimed by the Dutch and by a group of Englishmen known as the Seabrook Company, who were controlled by Massachusetts Bay. . . .

Connecticut was now a powder keg. While the treaty between the Pequots and Massachusetts facilitated orderly settlement of Connecticut, it did not quell intertribal feuding or arrest the rivalry between Connecticut and the Bay Colony. The success of both Puritan colonies depended upon forcing the Pequots into a degree of subjugation. . . .

But if the Connecticut settlers were permitted to punish the Pequots, they might make them tributaries to Connecticut or fight them and claim the territory by right of conquest. Massachusetts could not permit this to happen.

**Source 15: Historian James Axtell, *The European and the Indian*, 1981**

The first encounter with Indian warfare, during the Pequot War in Connecticut, was too brief for the English to learn very much and too successful for them to need to. In a conflict that lasted only a few months, the English troops and their Mohegan allies obliterated the Pequots with a final surprise attack and superior firepower. Since the Indians had not yet acquired guns from the Dutch and the French, the English found their fighting methods simply ludicrous. After Fort Mystic, the Pequot stronghold, had been fired and riddled with English bullets, killing most of its five hundred inhabitants, the male survivors charged the English battalia surrounding it with little success, so Capt. John Underhill sent the Mohegans against them "that we might see the nature of the Indian war." By English standards this was so ineffective that "they might fight seven years and not kill seven men . . .," remarked Underhill. . . . "This fight," he concluded, "is more for pastime, than to conquer and subdue enemies."

Its ineffectiveness, however, was not due to lack of European firearms. . . . When the Indians wanted to kill their opponents, especially the English, they had the means and the skill necessary.

**Source 16: Historian Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America*, 1982**

The Pequots understood . . . they were embroiled in a complicated set of disputes over land and trade. These were the real causes of the war. . . . At the center of the tensions was the English-Dutch rivalry and intertribal Indian hostilities. Since 1622 the Dutch in New Amsterdam had controlled the Indian trade of New England through their connections to both the Pequot and the Narragansett, the regions's two strongest tribes. After the arrival of the English and their rapid expansion in the early 1630s, the Dutch perceived that their trading empire was greatly threatened. Hence, they purchased land on the lower Connecticut River—an area on which several English groups had their eyes—and built a trading post there to defend their regional economic hegemony. Some of the Pequots' discontented client tribes, however, were already breaking away, signing separate trade agreements with and ceding to the English. Amidst such fragmentation, expansionist New England was ready, with the aid of its Narragansett allies, to drive the Dutch traders from southern New England and subdue the Pequots who occupied some of the area's most fertile soil. The Pequots first tried to placate the English; when this proved impossible, they chose to resist.

In the war that ensued, the English found the Pequots more than a match until they were able to surround a secondary Pequot village on the Mystic River in May 1637. The English and their Narragansett allies attacked before dawn, infiltrated the town, and set fire to the Pequot wigwams inside before beating a fast retreat. . . . Retreating from the flame-engulfed village, the English regrouped and waited for fleeing survivors from the inferno. Most of the victims were non-combatants since the Pequot warriors were gathered at another village about five miles away. Before the day was over a large part of the Pequot tribe had been slaughtered, many by fire and others by gun. . . .

For the Puritans the extermination of the Pequots was proof of their political and military ascendancy. Its additional function was to provide a response to anxiety and disunity that had become widely diffused throughout the colony.

These fears were associated not only with the threat of the Pequots but also with the dissensions within Puritan society. It is well to remember that the war came on the heels of three years of intense internal discord centered around the challenges to the power of the magistrates by Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. These challenges, in turn, involved not only theological questions but economic restrictions, the distribution of political power, and competing land claims among English settlers in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Their colonies beset with controversy, the Puritan leaders talked morbidly about God's anger at seeing his chosen people subvert the City on the Hill. In this sense, the Puritan determination to destroy the Pequots and the level of violence manifested at Fort Mystic can be partially understood in terms of the self-doubt and guilt that Puritans could expiate only by exterminating so many of "Satan's agents." Dead Pequots were offered to God as atonement for Puritan failings.

**Source 17:** Historian Yasuhide Kawashima, "Indian Servitude in the Northeast," 1988

Faced with a constant problem of scarcity of labor, English colonists in the Northeast made attempts from the very beginning to obtain Indian labor. . . .

The Whites tried to enslave Indians whenever they could. Principle was not so much at issue as convenience. The Puritans justified the enslavement of the prisoners taken in a just war. Following the Pequot War of 1637, for example, Massachusetts not only enslaved 48 captive women and children within the colony but also sold some fierce Pequots to the West Indies in exchange for more docile Blacks, who became the first Negro slaves in New England.

**Source 18:** Pamphlet of the Mashantucket Pequot Nation, 1993

The attack on the Mystic Fort was not the end of the war. Over the next few months the English continued to hunt down the Pequot from other forts and villages. They captured and killed sachems . . . and their families. Fearful of a reunited Pequot Tribe, those captured who were not killed or sold into slavery were divided among the Mohegan and Narragansett. In 1638 the treaty of Hartford was signed. It divided the surviving Pequot among the Mohegans and Narragansetts, forbid the survivors to return to their country, and to never again be referred to as Pequot. . . . The forced assimilation into other tribes was not successful. The Pequot managed to retain their identity in spite of attempts to the contrary. The Pequot, forced to live under Uncas and the Mohegans, and the Pawcatuck Pequot who were placed under the control of the Narragansetts. . . .

In the years following the Pequot War, the Mashantucket Pequot, with the aid of Connecticut Governor John Winthrop, Jr., were granted the right to return to Pequot country. This was accomplished under the leadership of Robin Cassasinamon who became the first Pequot sachem after the war and remained so until his death in 1692. Cassasinamon's group settled in New London (Nameag), then later moved to Groton (Noank) in 1650. They were eventually given 2,500 acres of land at Mashantucket when the reservation was established in 1666. . . . As more settlers arrived, the original Mashantucket Reservation was reduced. . . . Land loss continued and by 1856 there were only 214 acres left. . . .

The land base has increased from 214 acres to more than 3,072 acres [as of 1993]. Since 1983, economic development initiatives have been implemented and on-Reservation employment and quality of life has been enormously improved. Using other successful tribes as examples, a high stakes bingo operation was opened in 1986. It paved the way for new jobs, the return of more tribal members, community developments, and was also the forerunner for the Foxwoods High Stakes Bingo and Casino.

While Indian gaming has returned the Mashantucket Pequot to the status of being economic leaders in their region, it has also help[ed] them to rebuild their community, educate their tribal members, and ease the twilight years for their elders. In addition, the enterprises on the Reservation have reached into greater Southeastern Connecticut and neighboring Rhode Island and Massachusetts by providing new jobs and a demand for increased goods and services.

### Questioning the Past

1. What were the causes and the consequences of the Pequot War?
2. John Fiske asserted that "the annihilation of the Pequots can be condemned only by those who read history so incorrectly as to suppose that savages . . . can always be dealt with according to the methods in use between civilized peoples." Defend this statement and then offer the counterargument to it. Define "savage" and list characteristics that imply savagery. Compare this list to the various parties involved in the Pequot War.
3. Were wars such as that between the English colonists and the Pequot inevitable? Why or why not?