

## MASHPEE'S IDENTITY

Why there should be speculation about Mashpee's identity, with the emphasis on its traditional character being on the way out, is particularly agrivating to those of us Wampanoags who are Mashpee's Native Community. Development, architectural design, newcomers, one center or five centers, do not change the history and identity of Mashpee.

"Mashpee was once a close-knit community - all that has changed," stated our Town Planner. What gives him the right to make this statement? We haven't seen him at one of our inter-tribal socials, tribal meetings, youth gatherings, or any number of other Indian activities which we have perpetuated down through the years as started by our ancestors long before Columbus "discovered" us. We are still a very close knit community, following our traditional culture, and despite adversities, we move forward.

In 1870, Mashpee was incorporated into a Town. It was an Indian town then and it is an Indian town now, as the "Land of the Wampanoags" signs indicated. We recognize that Mashpee Commons is there. We do not recognize that Mashpee has been reinvented. Why is the word "re-invented" being used at all? Is it because there are those who wish to wipe out Mashpee's Indian identity as permanently as when Columbus "discovered" us?

The fact is that we have a very unique identity. Why can't we go forward and be proud of that identity - "The Land of the Wampanoag." By the way, after all these changes are made, what is the Town of Mashpee being faced with? Not Identity...Environmental Strangulation is the answer???

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