

## Historical Background

After the Pequot War, a war between New England settlers and Indians in 1636-1637, New England was free of major Indian wars for about forty years. During this period, the region's Native American population declined rapidly and suffered severe losses of land and cultural independence.

Between 1600-1675, New England's Native American population fell from 140,000 to 10,000, while the English population grew to 50,000. Meanwhile, the New England Puritans launched a campaign to convert the Indians to Protestantism. One leading missionary convinced about 2000 Indians to live in "praying towns," where they were expected to adopt white customs.

In 1675, the chief of the Pokanokets, Metacomet (whom the English called King Philip), forged a military alliance including about two-thirds of the region's Indians. In 1675, he led an attack on Swansea, Massachusetts. Over the next year, both sides raided villages and killed hundreds of victims. Twelve out of ninety New England towns were destroyed. This war was called King Philip's War.

Relative to the size of the population, King Philip's War was the most destructive conflict in American history. Five percent of New England's population was killed--a higher proportion than Germany, Britain, or the United States lost during World War II. Indian casualties were far higher; perhaps 40 percent of New England's Indian population was killed or fled the region. When the war was over, the power of New England's Indians was broken. The region's remaining Indians would live in small, scattered communities, serving as the colonists' servants, slaves, and tenants.

## Document A: King Philip's Perspective (Modified)

King Philip agreed to come to us; he came unarmed, and about 40 of his men armed. We sat very friendly together. We told him our business. They said that they had done no wrong; the English wronged them. We said that both sides thought the other side wronged them, but our desire was to avoid war. The Indians agreed that fighting was the worst way; then they asked how we might avoid war. We said, by negotiation. They said that they lost many square miles of land through negotiation.

They said they had been the first in doing good to the English, and the English were the first in doing wrong. They said when the English first came, their King's Father prevented other Indians from wronging the English, and gave them corn and showed them how to plant, and let them have a 100 times more land than now the Indian King had for his own people.

And another grievance was, if 20 of their honest Indians testified that a Englishman had done them wrong, it was as nothing; and if but one of their worst Indians testified against any Indian, when it pleased the English it was sufficient.

Another grievance was, the English made them drunk and then cheated them; that now, they had no hope left to keep any land.

Another grievance, the English cattle and horses still increased and kept spoiling their corn. They thought when the English bought land of them they would have kept their cattle upon their own land, but the English didn't use a fence.

### Vocabulary

Grievance: complaint

*Source: John Easton, an official from Rhode Island, met King Philip in June of 1675 in an effort to negotiate a settlement. Easton recorded Philip's complaints. However, Easton was unable to prevent a war, and the fighting broke out the following month.*