

Chapter Three

The Genesis of the 1726 Treaty: The Wabanaki–New England War of 1722–1725

The 1726 treaty was signed by the three northernmost New England colonies – Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Nova Scotia – and the Abenaki, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, and Mi'kmaq people. Treaty discussions began in Boston in the summer of 1725, the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet having delegated four Penobscot Abenaki to negotiate for them. On 15 December 1725, an agreement was signed, though the terms stipulated that each village would have to ratify the treaty. Abenaki villages, which would have included peoples living along the Penobscot River and farther west, were to ratify the treaty at Casco Bay at the mouth of the Kennebec River. The Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy were to ratify the treaty at Annapolis Royal in British Nova Scotia. (Type-scripts of the Annapolis Royal treaty are on pages 61–4.)

The 1726 treaty ended a period of intermittent conflict between the British colonies and the Wabanaki. Between 1689 and 1697, and again from 1702 to 1713, the Mi'kmaq and their allies had been at war with Massachusetts. In 1722 the region was again plunged into conflict. This war, which would end with the signing of the 1726 treaty, was different from the earlier conflicts. The earlier wars in the colonies had been sideshows in a greater conflict between Great Britain and France. In contrast, the conflict between Massachusetts and Nova Scotia and the Wabanaki in 1722–5 occurred during a period of peace between France and Great Britain.

Peace having been made in Europe, New France disclaimed any official interest in New England's conflict with the Wabanaki. French and aboriginal warriors did not fight side by side, as they had before. Nor did French privateers cruise the Massachusetts shoreline, capturing fishing and trading vessels. But even though French militiamen and priva-