



For Immediate Release  
November 16, 2015  
Mashpee, MA

## **Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP) to launch immersion preschool in Fall 2016; Comprehensive K-8 language immersion activities to begin in January 2016**

(MASHPEE, MA) In partnership with four Wampanoag tribal communities (including the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Aquinnah Wampanoag, the Assonet Band, and the Herring Pond Wampanoag), and the Montessori Academy of Cape Cod, the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP) announced this week, plans for a new Wôpanâak language preschool for tribal families. Citing the desire to move in a new direction that represents a positive, community-driven choice that reinforces tribal sovereignty and self-determination, WLRP has withdrawn its application to open a publicly funded charter school for elementary students. WLRP, which staffs the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Language Department is also collaborating with the Mashpee Tribal Youth Programs, Education, and Historic Preservation Departments to offer K-8 afterschool immersion programming for 2.5-3 hours daily, beginning the first week of January.

Thanks to a growing partnership between the Montessori Academy for Teacher Training and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's Childcare Program, language instructors at the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project are currently attending an intensive Montessori-based Early Childhood Education Teacher Certification Program and are poised to begin their practicum teaching in August 2016 with approximately fourteen Wampanoag preschool students. WLRP's teaching team will co-launch a Wôpanâak language immersion school in August 2016 starting first with pre-school, and then expanding to kindergarten in 2017. The school will be on-site at the existing Montessori Academy of Cape Cod in North Falmouth, MA, which is a state-licensed early childhood education facility.

While WLRP initially pursued a state charter in order to launch a K through 3 language and cultural immersion school, organizational leadership concurrently developed a private school plan in order to implement a tribally sovereign educational institution offering Wôpanâak medium instruction for Wampanoag families.

"We are grateful to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for having considered our charter application and for providing valuable feedback on its content," said Jessie Baird, WLRP's volunteer linguistic director and tribal council liaison to the Mashpee Wampanoag Language Department. "Our alternate plan for a Montessori-based preschool ensures that we are faithful to our original vision for a Wôpanâak medium school, while providing an excellent early childhood education in our traditional language. Funding for the school can be provided via state and federal childcare vouchers which will allow affordability and access for our tribal members."

The Mashpee Wampanoag's unique partnership with the Montessori Academy was developed by the Tribes' Childcare Program Manager Marcy Hendricks and the Montessori Academy's Director Rosanne Amaru, and provides funding for WLRP's language teachers, or Linguists in Residence, to obtain Montessori certification. WLRP's board of directors who govern the state-licensed 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, voted unanimously this month to formalize a business relationship with the Montessori Academy of Cape Cod, with the ultimate goal of operating a language- and culture-based immersion school for Wampanoag children.

In addition to pursuing the Montessori teacher certification process and partnership, WLRP successfully completed a three-year project on September 30, 2015, funded by the federal Administration for Native Americans supporting development of a Wôpanâak language-based curriculum framework, Wampanoag cultural standards, and over one thousand daily lesson plans in preparation for opening a language immersion school in 2016. These materials will

form the basis for WLRP's new afterschool language immersion initiative that will serve dozens of tribal students at the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Community and Government Center beginning January 4, 2016 from 2-5pm daily Monday through Friday.

#### **About the Wôpanaak Language Reclamation Project**

WLRP is a twenty-two year-old nonprofit organization serving four tribal communities of Wampanoag People. Our mission is to reclaim *Wôpanâak* ~ the Wampanoag language ~ as the principal means of expression within the Wampanoag Nation. The Wampanoag community is the first Native American community to reclaim a language with no living speakers in many generations. This groundbreaking, unprecedented language revitalization has been possible due to the existence of hundreds of documents written by Wampanoag people who became the first Natives in the English-speaking New World to develop and use an alphabetic writing system. Today in 2015, over 150 years after the language went dormant, the reclamation of *Wôpanâak* is both vital to the cultural and spiritual foundation of the thousands of Wampanoag who cherish their ancestors' words, and provides the world with a powerful expression of indigenous survival that can provide inspiration and hope all across Indian Country.

#### **For more information contact:**

Jennifer Weston  
Immersion School Developer  
[jweston@wlrp.org](mailto:jweston@wlrp.org)  
(508) 477-0208 ext.168

#### **About the Montessori Academy of Cape Cod**

The Montessori Academy of Cape Cod was founded in Falmouth, MA in 1992 and has provided an early childhood education to hundreds of children. The school is grounded in Maria Montessori's philosophy that education prepares one for life through the development of a healthy self-image, a respect for each other, a concern for the environment, and a positive attitude towards learning. In the Montessori classroom environment, as children discover their own self-worth and the worth of others, a foundation of progress towards a peaceful world is formed.

#### **For more information contact:**

Rosenne Amaru  
Director  
[info@falmouthmontessori.org](mailto:info@falmouthmontessori.org)  
(508) 563-9010

#### **About the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe' Childcare Voucher Program**

The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe provides and supports programs that nurture the positive social and academic development of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal members, especially tribal youth. They partner with schools, colleges, and other educational, cultural, and social institutions to provide holistic, creative community-based educational programs. The **Tribal Child Care Voucher Program** in particular, **provides** subsidized Child Care Vouchers to low-income and working Native American Families.

#### **For more information contact:**

Marcy Hendricks  
Child Care Program Manager  
[MaHendricks@mwtribe.com](mailto:MaHendricks@mwtribe.com)  
(508) 477-0208 ext.160