

# Who Was Squanto the Native American Indian from Massachusetts?

## *Squanto Massachusetts Native American Indian*

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Squanto was a Native American Indian and member of the Wampanoag Patuxet tribe. He was born around 1585 in what is now Massachusetts and died in 1622 after suffering an illness. His name was actually Tisquantum but he was called Squanto for short.

Best known for helping 17th century settlers (Pilgrims) in New England, Squanto may not have been available to assist these settlers had he not escaped life as a slave in Spain.

Squanto's enslavement took place, as enslavement usually does, following his capture and sale. His captor, an English explorer named Thomas Hunt, abducted him in 1614. Squanto would spend approximately five years enslaved in Europe.

In 1619, while Squanto was guiding another English explorer, Ferdinando Gorges, on a trip back to New England, Native American chief Massasoit, in essence, freed Squanto. Massasoit led his warriors to massacre Gorges and his crew and then took Squanto from the ship.

Although free from slavery and no longer needing to act as enslaved sea captain's pilot, misfortune continued to befall Squanto. He discovered a plague had wiped out his tribe. Historians believe the fatal plague was small pox.

In addition to sour tastes Squanto had in his mouth brought on by his capture and enslavement, he had to live with the knowledge that Chief Massasoit had lost men to unprovoked English murdering. Atop all of this, Chief Massasoit told Squanto that English sailors had stolen from Native American corn stores and graves.

Through all the troubles that befell him and despite the bulk of his troubles transpiring through English settler imposed hardships, Squanto remained a principled man with a good heart. It was to the white man's favor that, two years following his New England return, his heart and humanitarian outlook inspired him to help Pilgrims living, but starving, at Plymouth Colony learn to fish and how to use fish to fertilize corn in order to increase their crop yield.

Squanto not only helped Massachusetts settlers learn to fish and grow crops, he also became friends with them. Having learned English while enslaved, he was able to act as an interpreter between English and Native American leaders and thus was able to help with the Treaty of Plymouth negotiations. In 1621, Chief Massasoit and Governor William Bradford signed the treaty disclosing their agreement that Native Americans and settlers would not fight one another; and the consequences for those found in violation of said treaty

Squanto also helped the pilgrims by acting as translator during trade agreement negotiations with Native American tribes.