



PERSPECTIVES

MASSACHUSETTS ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH 2005

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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125



What do you see when you look at a pot?

Native American potters continue the tradition of making clay vessels today; their perspectives on clay pots are a critically important contribution to archaeological studies of the past. Read on to learn what modern Native Americans and archaeologists see when looking at ceramic pots.

“When I look at Wampanoag pottery I get a feeling that those earth minerals are holding Wampanoag mysteries and medicines.”

--Ramona Peters, *Nosapocket* 2005, Wampanoag potter and artist.

“The clay pot represents the Spirit and love of its maker. The first people of this land have always been keenly aware of their physical environment and relationship of living in harmony with Mother Earth. Before the clay is taken from Mother Earth, the molder offers thanks to the Great Spirit for this gift of resource to be used in the making of a clay pot.”

--Anita Neilsen, *Wampanoag*

“The first things I would examine are the decoration on the pot, the shape of the neck... and the tempering material. These are all clues as to how old it is, and the style of decoration may also tell me how the people who made this pot were related to other New England tribes. Examination of a thin section of a piece of the pot could tell me exactly where its makers got their clay, whether they used the coil or slab technique to make it, and how hot a fire they used to fire it. Finally chemical analysis of the residue in the pot can tell me what was cooked in it.”

--Barbara Luedtke. The late Barbara Luedtke was a professor of anthropology at UMASS Boston. She was a well-known scholar of Native American archaeology and an expert on Native life in the Massachusetts Bay area.

The pots pictured here are the work of Wampanoag potter/artist Ramona Peters, whose Wampanoag name is Nosapocket. To learn more about Ramona Peters' art please visit her website: www.wildwind.com/rpeters/home.htm.



Waquoi



Ancient Slopes