



## Report on King Philip's War Edward Randolph (1676)

*King Philip's War was an anti-colonial uprising waged by several indigenous peoples of New England. The uprising was led by a Wampanoag chief named Metacomet, who used also the English name Philip. Although the uprising inflicted considerable damage on the New England colonies, the English ultimately defeated Metacomet's forces with assistance from other indigenous peoples, most importantly the Mohawks.*

*The following selection comes from a report that Edward Randolph, an official visiting New England, wrote for the English government after Metacomet had been killed and most of the fighting had ended. Randolph offers his assessment of the causes of the war, for which he largely blames the colonists. Setting aside the question of how accurate or complete Randolph's assessment is, the document provides a usefully concrete description of means by which indigenous people were subjugated to colonial rule. The document also points to ways that religion was involved in conflicts between indigenous peoples and colonists, as well as between competing colonial powers.*

Various are the reports and conjectures of the causes of the present Indian war. Some impute it to an imprudent zeal in the magistrates of Boston to Christianize those heathen before they were civilized and enjoining them the strict observation of their laws, which to a people so rude and licentious hath proved even intolerable, and that the more for that while the magistrates, for their profit, put the laws severely in execution against the Indians, the people, on the other side, for lucre and gain, entice and provoke the Indians to the breach thereof—especially to drunkenness, to which those people are so generally addicted that they will strip themselves to their skin to have their fill of rum and brandy. The Massachusetts have made a law that every Indian drunk should pay 10 shillings or be whipped, according to the discretion of the magistrate. Many of these poor people willingly offered their backs to the lash to save their money; whereupon, the magistrates finding much trouble and no profit to arise to the government by whipping, did change that punishment into 10 days' work for such as could not or would not pay the fine of 10 shillings, which did highly incense the Indians.

Some believe there have been vagrant and jesuitical priests who have made it their business, for some years past, to go from Sachem to Sachem to exasperate the Indians against the English and to bring them into a confederacy, and that they were promised supplies from France and other parts to extirpate the English nation out of the continent of America. Others impute the cause to some injuries offered to the Sachem Philip; for he being possessed of a tract of land called Mount Hope—a very fertile, pleasant, and rich soil—some English had a mind to dispossess him thereof, who, never wanting one pretense or other to attain their end, complained of injuries done by Philip and his Indians to their stock and cattle, whereupon Philip was often summoned before the magistrate, sometimes imprisoned, and never released but upon parting with a considerable part of his land.

But the government of the Massachusetts (to give it in their own words) do declare these are the great evils for which God hath given the heathen commission to rise against them: the woeful breach of the fifth commandment in contempt of their authority, which is a sin highly provoking to the Lord; for men wearing long hair and periwigs made of women's hair; for women wearing

borders of hair and for cutting, curling, and laying out the hair, and disguising themselves by following strange fashions in their apparel; for profaneness in the people not frequenting their meetings, and others going away before the blessing be pronounced; for suffering the Quakers to live amongst them and to set up their thresholds by God's thresholds, contrary to their old laws and resolutions.

With many such reasons, but whatever be the cause, the English have contributed much to their misfortunes, for they first taught the Indians the use of arms, and admitted them to be present at all their musters and trainings, and showed them how to handle, mend, and fix their muskets, and have been furnished with all sorts of arms by permission of the government, so that the Indians are become excellent firemen. And at Natick there was a gathered church of praying Indians, who were exercised as trained bands under officers of their own; these have been the most barbarous and cruel enemies to the English of any others, Capt. Tom, their leader, being lately taken and hanged at Boston with one other of their chiefs. [...]

No advantage but many disadvantages have arisen to the English by the war, for about 600 men have been slain and 12 captains, most of them brave and stout persons and of loyal principles, whilst the church members had liberty to stay at home and not hazard their persons in the wilderness.

The loss to the English, in the several colonies, in their habitations and stock is reckoned to amount to £150,000, there having been about 1,200 houses burned; 8,000 head of cattle, great and small, killed; and many thousand bushels of wheat, peas, and other grain burned [...] and upward of 3,000 Indians—men, women, and children—destroyed, who, if well managed, would have been very serviceable to the English, which makes all manner of labor dear.

The war, at present, is near an end. In Plymouth colony, the Indians surrender themselves to Gov. Winslow upon mercy, bring in all their arms, and are wholly at his disposal, except life and transportation. But for all such as have been notoriously cruel to women and children, so soon as discovered they are to be executed in the sight of their fellow Indians.

The government of Boston have concluded a peace upon these terms:

1. That there be henceforward a firm peace between the Indians and the English.
2. That after publication of the articles of peace by the general court, if any English shall willfully kill an Indian, upon due proof he shall die; and if an Indian kill an Englishman and escape, the Indians are to produce him and he to pass trial by the English laws.
3. That the Indians shall not conceal any known enemies to the English, but shall discover them and bring them to the English.
4. That upon all occasions, the Indians are to aid and assist the English against their enemies and to be under English command.
5. That all Indians have liberty to sit down at their former habitations without let.

**Source:** "Copy of a Paper endorsed Mr. E.R.'s Narrative Sept. 20th and Octo. 12th 1676," in Thomas Hutchison, *A Collection of Original Papers Relative to the History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay* (Boston: Thomas and John Fleet, 1769), 477-513, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433081763405>. Public domain, Google-digitized.

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